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(Hansard)**

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41st Parliament

Monday
23 April 2018

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41^e législature

Lundi
23 avril 2018

Speaker: Honourable Dave Levac
Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Dave Levac
Greffier : Todd Decker



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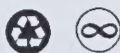
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 23 April 2018

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 23 avril 2018

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

BIRTH OF MEMBER'S GRANDCHILD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: I am pleased to announce the birth of a new grandson. Rowen Scott Clark was born yesterday morning in Edmonton at 4:46 a.m., weighing eight pounds, six ounces, to proud parents Mitch and Megan and big brother Eli. Mom and little Rowen are doing well, and I hope to see them soon.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Very nice news.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Miss Monique Taylor: Since I'm the first member up after that wonderful introduction, I will congratulate the member from Leeds–Grenville.

I would like to welcome Chelsea MacDonald. Chelsea is from the great city of Hamilton, and she is a case-worker with women and children fleeing violence and abuse, with the Good Shepherd in Hamilton. Welcome to Queen's Park, Chelsea.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: It's really a great honour for me to first introduce, I believe for the first time in the House, Jagtaran Singh, who is legal counsel in the office of the government House leader. Jagtaran is fantastic to work with. What's more exciting today is that his parents are visiting Queen's Park, so please welcome his mother, Balwinder Kaur, and his father, Surjit Singh, to Queen's Park.

I also want to welcome the parents and grandparents of our page captain, Joseph Berman. Please welcome to Queen's Park Joseph's mom, Pearl Gropper Berman, and dad, Drew Berman, but most importantly, Joseph's grandparents Ruth and Lony Gropper.

Mr. Jim Wilson: On behalf of my colleague the member from Nepean–Carleton, Lisa MacLeod: The page captain today is Faraaz Jan. Shireeh and Salman Jan are his parents and they're with us today. His brother is Faiz Jan, and he was a page in the 2016 spring session. They're with us this morning and we welcome them to Queen's Park.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'd like to welcome 10,000 members of LIUNA, who are on the front lawns right now. Would you like me to introduce each one of them individually?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Sure, go ahead.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It would take me a little while, but I want to welcome them. They're here demanding fairness in labour legislation. I want to welcome them here today to Queen's Park.

BIRTH OF CHILD TO DUKE AND DUCHESS OF CAMBRIDGE

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport on a point of order.

Hon. Daiene Vernile: I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent from the House to convey our congratulations to the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge on the birth of their son, their third child, just a few hours ago. Congratulations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I hope I get this right: The Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport is seeking unanimous consent to offer our congratulations to the royal family. Do we agree? Agreed. I will see that a copy of Hansard gets to the couple.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTING PRACTICES

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Acting Premier. The Financial Accountability Office was very concerned about the Liberal hydro financing scheme and asked MPPs to make certain the Auditor General approved. Not only did the auditor say the scheme does not meet accounting standards, she said that to flow the costs through Ontario Power Generation, as the scheme called for, will add \$4 billion. She said, "We're talking \$4 billion more than needed" just "to get an accounting result."

Now the Globe and Mail is taking this scandal national with a damning indictment of this government's practices.

Mr. Speaker, now that the Liberal scheme has been disclosed, will the government follow the law and save the Ontario taxpayers \$4 billion?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I'm pleased to rise and once again talk about the policy choice that we made as a government to ensure that we continue to have a reliable electricity system, a clean electricity system, and an affordable electricity system for the ratepayers of today and for the ratepayers of tomorrow.

The fair hydro plan, the plan that we brought forward, keeps the cost of borrowing within the rate base, not the tax base, because that's the logical thing to do. The policies and the implementation process for the fair hydro plan were designed and extensively reviewed by senior bureaucrat officials from the Ministry of Energy, from the Ministry of Finance, from the Treasury Board Secretariat, from the Office of the Provincial Controller, from Cabinet Office, from the Ontario Financing Authority, from the IESO, from Ontario Power Generation, and we worked with third-party experts from firms such as KPMG, EY—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the Acting Premier: The logical thing to do is not spend the extra \$4 billion.

The Globe and Mail clearly illustrates that not only will Ontario families pay tens of billions of dollars for this Liberal hydro scheme, but the secret accounting will cost taxpayers \$4 billion more. The article reads, "Alexandre Laurin, the C.D. Howe Institute's research director, said he'd never before encountered such a convoluted arrangement in the public sphere. To him, the use of related party transactions between multiple entities resembles tax-avoidance schemes in the private sector."

"The same accountants that are advising the government are advising the private sector to build other types of complex accounting structures," he told the Globe. "How crazy is this, really?"

Mr. Speaker, will the government come clean on what the Globe and Mail has titled "bad books"?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: President of the Treasury Board. *Interjections.*

Hon. Eleanor McMahon: I know that the members opposite are anxious to hear the answer; that's why they asked the question.

Speaker, our government presents the province's finances fairly and accurately, and in accordance with Canadian public sector accounting standards. The impact of the fair hydro plan will be transparent in the consolidated financial statements of our province.

At the core of this issue is a technical issue about whether or not the IESO is a rate-regulated agency and should thus use rate-regulated accounting. The Auditor General does not believe that the IESO should use rate-regulated accounting, and we respectfully disagree, Speaker. Instead, the AG is advocating for an accounting practice that shields \$17 billion in market transactions over which the IESO has oversight, and those are now transparent and in the public domain.

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In closing, I know the member opposite mentioned the public. They are waiting, as are we, with bated breath to see what the other side is going to do about hydro. We've yet to hear.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Well, back to the Deputy Premier. It's transparent, all right: We saw right through it. In a statement to the Globe, KPMG emphasized it had no

formal role in selecting or approving Ontario's accounting policies, nor did Deloitte. Ernst and Young declined to answer questions about its work, according to the Globe and Mail. Yet the energy minister keeps saying all of them have approved this government's scheme. All of the firms deny that.

Mr. Speaker, do we need more gas-plant-style scandal hearings to get to the truth yet again?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Eleanor McMahon: The Minister of Energy, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Once again, I'm pleased to rise and talk about the work that we have done with our accounting firms, Mr. Speaker, and the policies and the implementation process for the fair hydro plan were designed and extensively reviewed, as I said before, by EY, KPMG and Deloitte. In conjunction with that, we worked extensively with senior bureaucratic officials within my ministry, within the Ministry of Finance, within the Treasury Board Secretariat, the Office of the Provincial Controller, the Cabinet Office, as well as the Ontario Financial Authority and the Independent Electricity System Operator, and of course OPG. Through this work, we considered a range of implementation options and ensured that due diligence was completed.

Once again, these were policy choices that we made to ensure that we continue to have a clean, reliable and affordable electricity system.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I've listened carefully to the round of three questions, and we're in warnings.

New question.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Mr. Todd Smith: My question this morning is for the Minister of Energy. If the \$4 billion wasted on the Liberals' unfair hydro plan isn't outrageous enough, Ontarians were shocked last week to learn that the Hydro One board secretly inserted a poison pill into the contract of the Hydro One CEO that would allow him to cash in \$10 million in severance on the way out the door should he be fired.

Mr. Speaker, when was the Minister of Energy aware of this \$10-million severance package?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: We recognize that executive salaries are high compared to the vast majority of Ontario salaries and remain committed to Hydro One's regulation, accountability and transparency—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm serious. Finish.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker—accountability and transparency through our government's involvement as a majority shareholder. That said, Doug Ford knows very well that Hydro One is now a publicly traded company, not a government entity, and

his rhetoric won't take one cent, not one cent, off electricity bills.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry is warned.

Finish.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Hydro One's governance agreement is publicly available, and we urge the Conservatives and Doug Ford to read it. Its purpose is to ensure that the structure of Hydro One benefits ratepayers and has allowed them to find \$114 million in savings, translating to lower electricity rates and winter disconnections, and enhanced customer service. I'll get more in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Todd Smith: Mr. Speaker, it was the Liberal government who sold Hydro One when more than 80% of taxpayers said that it was the wrong thing to do for the future of the province of Ontario. It was the Premier who said time and time again—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Niagara Falls is warned.

Finish, please.

Mr. Todd Smith: Mr. Speaker, it was the Premier who said time and time again in this House that the government retained the right to fire the board and the CEO at Hydro One. Yet this occurred behind closed doors, a \$10-million severance package for the six-million-dollar man, should he be fired.

My question to the Minister of Energy: Did he even know about this secret arrangement at the board?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: What we do know about is the 25% savings that we brought to all families—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Niagara West–Glanbrook is warned.

Finish, please.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker—the 25% savings that we brought to all residents and families right across this province.

Again, we recognize that executive salaries are high compared to the vast majority of Ontario salaries. We're going to remain committed to Hydro One's regulation, accountability and transparency through our government's involvement as that majority shareholder.

But we continue to be perplexed by Doug Ford's out-of-control and erratic scheme to fire the leadership of the company, because he hasn't said what his goal is or how this will leave the people of Ontario better off. We know that the rates are set independently by the Ontario Energy Board, not the CEO of Hydro One. We'll continue to work in the best interests of the people of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Todd Smith: I don't know how the Minister of Energy does it. Every day during question period, he goes around and around and around and around like a broken record. But where was he when the people of Ontario were getting hit with \$4 billion more than they

should have in the Liberals' unfair hydro plan? Where was he when this secret deal was being cooked up by the board at Hydro One to hand out a \$10-million severance package to the six-million-dollar man, the CEO and president of Hydro One? Where was he?

He can spin like a broken record in the House, but does he believe it was the right thing to do to put a secret deal together for—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. The Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation is warned.

Minister?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: We've been standing here, right in this House, helping the people of Ontario, as they vote against every single thing that we do to bring forward an affordable electricity system. Making sure that we eliminate coal: They voted against that. Bringing in a 25% reduction for families—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have three on my mind, but I'll go for one. The member from Huron–Bruce is warned. And I think they know who I have on my mind.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Again, when we brought forward minimum wage to help families and help individuals across this province, they actually voted against it.

We know where we stand when it comes to the people of Ontario: We stand shoulder to shoulder with them. They vote against everything they can to make sure that it makes life more difficult for the people of this province. We will continue to work for the people of Ontario.

You know what, Mr. Speaker? When it comes to making sure that the electricity system is clean, reliable and affordable, it is this government that brought forward the fair hydro plan that has actually helped the people of Ontario. We'll continue to do what's right for the people of this province.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Acting Premier. After 15 years of underfunding hospitals, including five years of frozen operating budgets for hospitals, does the Premier realize—does this government realize—that you have created a crisis in health care in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: To the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Mr. Speaker, our budget this year has laid out precisely what we intend to do, and that is to continue to invest in hospital funding, as we have each and every year since we took office.

In this particular budget, we're making a historic investment of an additional \$822 million in Ontario's publicly funded hospitals. This amounts to an increase overall, on average, of 4.6%. This will increase capacity, decrease wait times and improve access to care for families across Ontario. We are directly benefiting people

living in Ontario, increasing their access to care in our hospitals.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Again to the Acting Premier or the minister: The Premier's budget was more about trying to get headlines than trying to fix the problems that this Liberal government has created.

The CEO of Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare said, "Hospital funding has not kept pace with many new and rising costs"—like hydro. "The ... budget is very disappointing, and does not address the multimillion-dollar operating shortfall we are projecting...."

Why doesn't this government get it, Mr. Speaker?

1050

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I'm certainly pleased to give some specifics as to what our budget actually will mean for the people of Ontario. It will give patients access to 26,000 additional MRI operating hours; 14,000 more surgical and medical procedures; 3,000 more cardiac procedures; and it will give patients access to more essential services in hospitals, like cardiac care, critical care, chemotherapy and treatment for stroke. It will decrease wait times for hip, knee, cataract, shoulder, cornea and spine surgeries.

We're increasing our investment each and every year. We're doing it in a careful, thoughtful way, depending on the demographics of a particular region. We're looking at that with the LHINs, and we're increasing our investments.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: In order to address a problem, you actually have to admit that there is a problem. Fifteen years of Liberal decisions have created a crisis in our health care system. It's in all of our ridings. You cannot hide from it.

Instead of fixing hospitals, Doug Ford would further privatize health care or just close hospitals or health programs. The Liberals gave the people of this province hallway medicine; Doug Ford is going to give the people of this province parking lot medicine.

The good news is that we New Democrats have a plan to fix hospitals and end hallway medicine. But it is important to accept responsibility for what you have created in this province. Will this Premier accept responsibility and apologize to the people of this province for creating a crisis in health care in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Hospital funding in Ontario has increased by more than 65% since we took office in 2003. It is now at \$19 billion. In the past two years alone, we've increased operational funding to hospitals by almost \$1 billion. Also, last year, we committed an additional \$9 billion to support hospital infrastructure as part of our plan to invest \$19 billion in capital grants to hospitals over the next 10 years to keep our system sustainable for years to come.

Health care is a very complex issue, Mr. Speaker. We are doing our part when it comes to hospital funding.

PHARMACARE

Ms. Jennifer K. French: My question is to the Premier. New Democrats have a pharmacare plan for everyone. It will cover 90% of prescriptions, and no one is left behind. It is actually pharmacare for everyone. Why doesn't the Premier believe in universal pharmacare?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Certainly our government is committed, at the end of the day, hopefully, to have a national universal pharmacare program. We on this side of the House, being the type of responsible government that we are, are moving incrementally towards that goal.

Of course, we did announce our OHIP+ program that started on January 1 of this year: free drugs for everyone under the age of 25. The entire number of drugs is 4,400 drugs that are now covered. We believe this is an excellent step forward. Over a million prescriptions have already been filled, Mr. Speaker. This is the first step. Of course, I'll elaborate in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Again to the Premier: I don't think "incrementally" is going to cut it. The Premier and the government have talked about pharmacare, but the reality is, the government has had 15 years to act. Why has this Liberal government ignored pharmacare for the last 15 years?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, of course we do believe in incremental improvement as a responsible way in terms of building our budget, and so, of course, we have now increased our coverage in OHIP+ for all seniors over the age of 65. There will be no copay; there will be no deductible. This will be of immense benefit, again covering all 4,400 drugs to ensure that no one is left behind.

We have a comprehensive plan. It's going to make a real difference to the health of the community. I do want to point out that the NDP's plan apparently won't take place, won't be realized, until the year 2020.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: It surprises me that this government defends their junior drug plan and their senior drug plan. It's not fair to call it pharmacare when they don't actually care about anybody in between. The Premier thinks children should have access to medication; she also thinks they should be cut off when they turn 25. New Democrats don't think so. We don't ask how old you are when you go to the hospital, so we shouldn't care how old you are when you need a prescription.

Health care should be universal for a person with diabetes, asthma, HIV or any other chronic illness. They should have drug coverage. They should have coverage on their 25th birthday, their 30th birthday, their 40th, their 50th, and it goes on. Everybody, Speaker: That is what universal means.

So why doesn't the Premier believe in universal pharmacare?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Mr. Speaker, I'm sure you will recall that in our budget of this year, we took a further step. We introduced coverage for those with no private insurance between the ages of 25 and 65, so that they will have 80% of their costs reimbursed for dental and pharmacare: \$400 for an individual and \$700 for a family of four. This is an excellent step forward. More and more people are being covered. We have one out of two people in Ontario now covered for pharmacare.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Yesterday Hydro One's chair released a statement on their egregious \$10-million severance package for their six-million-dollar man.

Did the Premier or minister instruct Hydro One to release that statement and did they coordinate the statement with Hydro One? Yes or no, Minister?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Again, the board is an entity that works on its own. I wasn't aware that they were releasing that statement. But when it comes to Hydro One's governance agreement, Mr. Speaker, as I said, that's also publicly available and we urge the Conservatives to read that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Mr. Speaker, that's the fourth question today in which the minister has been asked what he knew about the \$10-million severance package for the six-million-dollar man, when he knew it and whether this was a coordinated effort between Hydro One and the government. I can't believe, as a former energy minister, that your hydro company wouldn't inform you back in November about such a significant change in the rules of the game over there at Hydro One.

Minister, last week the Premier walked out and you ran away from a scrum. I want to know what you're hiding, why you would walk away from a scrum and why you're not being forthright with the people of Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. The member will withdraw.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I once again was very happy to answer questions to the media and stay there for about 10 minutes. The only person I know who is doing the "Doug-and-dash," as it's starting to get known within media circles, is the leader of the Conservatives, who makes sure he answers one question and then disappears in the bus, or actually makes the announcement that he's going to fire the CEO and then leaves it to the member from Prince Edward-Hastings to answer those questions.

I don't have a problem actually talking about our government's record of making sure that we brought forward the fair hydro plan that reduced rates by 25%. I know that they sneakily snuck that into their—

Laughter.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Sneakily snuck; it's new words.

They snuck it into the People's Guarantee and then tossed it aside. You know what, Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I try not to become emotionally involved in any of these kinds of things, but that one got me.

New question.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Minister of Labour. Once again this Liberal government says one thing when it comes to being a friend of working people and then does another. Once again this Liberal government has chosen to introduce changes through omnibus legislation that favour one party, to effectively pick a fight and then stand back and watch.

In what universe does the Minister of Labour believe that it's appropriate and, frankly, even constitutional for the minister of the crown to arbitrarily strip unionized workers of their historic collective bargaining jurisdiction and hand-deliver that jurisdiction to another union?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'd like to thank the member for that very unbiased question.

Speaker, in the ICI sector, there's been a long-standing dispute between the parties. What we did was, we went out and we got one of the—

Interjections.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Speaker, we went out and got one of the pre-eminent experts on formwork, Kevin Burkett—world-renowned, internationally famous, somebody in the province of Ontario that people rely on to bring neutrality and fairness. He studied the current circumstances around the ICI formwork sector in the province and he made recommendations as to how we could move forward. We took that advice, and then we took it out again to Mike Mitchell, an expert in construction law, asked for specific recommendations, and that's what is before the House as I speak.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: The Minister of Labour, the Premier and the Minister of Economic Development have concocted this plan in schedule 14 of the budget bill to strip the historic jurisdiction from thousands of LIUNA members in the concrete-forming sector of our construction industry. If you listen closely, you can hear 10,000 of them right now on the front lawns ready to fight this legislation.

Speaker, not only will this cause immediate labour shortages, but it jeopardizes the economic welfare and pension security of retirees and the health and safety of workers in this sector. It will also impede the productivity of a sector that has literally built the communities in this province.

Will the minister reverse this draconian legislation, create a level playing field for all workers in this industry, and remove the dangerous, precedent-setting clause

that the Liberal government brought in through their budget legislation?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Speaker, as we've spent the last couple of years going through this process—it's been a long-standing dispute—we've tried to remain as neutral as we possibly can. The honourable member certainly has taken a side on this, and it's clear what side he's coming from, to the detriment of all the carpenters that have worked along with us on this, as well. So very clearly, I can see that there's one side being represented here.

Our job is to represent both sides, Speaker. That's why we brought in the arbitrator, why we brought—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Speaker, their recommendations are to level the playing field and ensure that we have continued fairness in the province of Ontario. In northern and eastern Ontario, no change; in southwestern Ontario, no change affecting the collective agreements. And in an expanded GTA, we're enforcing—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

New question.

MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. Ted McMeekin: My question is also for the Minister of Labour. Spring has seemingly finally arrived and it's now time for students around the province to look for summer jobs. In my area, the folks at the Goodwill Career Centre work hard each year to help students find jobs across the city. Last year, they placed over 300 students into summer jobs, and this year the demand has increased. The Goodwill Career Centre's message is this: If you're between 15 and 29 and you're looking for employment, we can help.

I believe that many of these jobs pay minimum wage, which is now much higher than it was last summer. It is so encouraging that, despite what we have heard from critics, students in my riding are benefiting from a thriving summer job market and increased minimum wage.

Minister, can you please tell us more about what we can expect to see around the province as a result of the increase in the minimum wage?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you to the member from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale for that question.

We all know the previous Conservative government froze the minimum wage at \$6.85 for nearly 10 years when they were in charge. As a result, people in this province who were working sometimes 35, 40 hours a week, and sometimes two or three jobs just to get by, could not get by. We knew we had to do better. That's why we've raised the minimum wage 12 times since

2003. It's now more than double what it was when it was frozen for all those years under the previous government.

But at the same time, we know the economy of the province of Ontario has grown. Our province is leading the G7 when it comes to economic growth; unemployment numbers as low as we've seen in years; 820,000 new jobs. Thanks to the minimum wage, Speaker, more Ontarians are able to benefit from that growth. That's something we should be proud of.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted McMeekin: I've seen that first-hand in my community, and while we have businesses expanding and creating wealth, not everyone was seeing the benefits of the growth. There were parents who were working full-time and finding it difficult to provide the essentials to their family, let alone save to get ahead in the future. The increase to a \$15 minimum wage means that they can more easily take care of themselves and their families.

I found it disappointing when our colleagues in the opposition voted against increasing the minimum wage, even more so when their leader promised he would roll it back. The simple fact is that these families cannot afford a rollback of the \$15 minimum wage. They cannot afford the Leader of the Opposition's plan to take money out of their pockets.

Minister, can you detail how our plan is different?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you again to the member for this very important question to people who need help a lot.

Our plan is simple. What we're going to do is raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour on January 1 of next year. That is different from the Leader of the Opposition. He promises to roll that back and to take that money directly out of the wallets of working people.

This is money they rely on to put food on the table, to keep a roof over their heads. It's lunch money. It's money for shoes for the kids' feet. These are the families that need our help. These are the people that rely on this.

At the same time, economists have already settled that an increase to a \$15-an-hour minimum wage means more money for workers after taxes. Nothing the Leader of the Opposition can say by taking that money away from these people changes that fact.

We know it's the time to invest in things that are going to help families. While they focus on making the rich richer, Speaker, we're focusing on efforts like the minimum wage and OHIP+.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is to the Acting Premier. The Liberals have held a total of 39 campaign-style announcements. At an estimated cost of \$7,500 each event, that brings the total amount spent campaigning on the taxpayers' dime by the Liberals to \$292,500. The Liberals are now under investigation by Elections Ontario. These events have to stop.

Mr. Speaker, will the Liberal Party pay back the taxpayer?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Acting Premier.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. I think the member opposite is a bit exaggerating what Elections Ontario have said in terms of their sort of boilerplate response they give when they receive complaints like the one they have received from the Conservatives.

Our focus is to make sure that we are talking about this very important budget, this budget that actually provides for a plan for care and opportunity for the people of Ontario, a budget that ensures that the people of Ontario get an increase in the minimum wage to \$15 an hour by January 1, 2019, and that ensures that pharmacare is expanded to our seniors 65 and more—not to mention, Speaker, investment in building new hospitals, bringing wait times down.

The reason the member opposite and the Conservatives don't want to talk about that is because they're going to cut all those important services that are so deserved by the people of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: Back to the Acting Premier. This government is so desperate to cling to power, they'll stoop to never-before-seen lows. There's no amount of taxpayers' dollars that they won't use for their own self-serving needs.

Speaker, how much more in taxpayer dollars will this government spend campaigning?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Clearly, the Conservatives had a busy weekend and they are trying to do everything in their power to deflect from the scandals that continue to emerge from their own party, questions that people are asking about them. Is it the sudden nomination of 11 Conservative candidates, entirely bypassing the democratic nomination process? Is it that they are ashamed about the commitment to removing all safe-injection sites if elected, sites that have saved lives of those suffering from mental health and addiction issues? Is it the commitment to undo police oversight in our province that was recently passed in this House, oversight—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Have that discussion outside of the House.

Answer, please.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Or is it the nomination of somebody like Tanya Granic Allen as part of their party, who is known to take an anti-Muslim stance, who is known to take an anti-woman stance? That's what they're trying to distract from.

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GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTING PRACTICES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Acting Premier. Over the weekend, an investigation by the Globe and Mail confirmed what the NDP has been saying for the past year: The Premier is wasting \$4 billion on a complicated private financing scheme whose sole

purpose is to conceal the fact that she's using debt to artificially lower hydro bills prior to the election. After the election, hydro bills will skyrocket yet again, rising by more than 70% over the next 10 years. Ontario families and businesses will be forced to pay back the billions in hydro debt plus another \$21 billion in interest.

Why is the Premier spending billions of dollars to mislead Ontarians into believing she's lowering—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will withdraw.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Withdraw, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Carry on.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Why is the Premier spending billions of dollars when, over the long run, she's actually driving hydro bills up even higher?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Once again, we reiterate the fact that we made a policy choice. This government made a policy choice to ensure that we continue to have clean, reliable and affordable electricity for ratepayers of today and for ratepayers of tomorrow. The fair hydro plan keeps the cost of borrowing within the rate base, not the tax base. We did that because that's the logical thing to do. That's how it's been done for decades.

Electricity financing should remain within the electricity system, and so we worked within my ministry with officials within the Ministry of Finance, the Treasury Board Secretariat, the Office of the Provincial Controller, Cabinet Office and, of course, three outside audit experts, to make sure that the range of implementation options were available and our due diligence was completed.

I'll answer more in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Again to the Acting Premier: The Premier's \$40-billion hydro borrowing scheme will not only drive up hydro bills over the long run; it actually violates public sector accounting standards. Emails obtained by the Auditor General prove that government officials knew this from the start when they were designing this scheme.

The Premier knew that her private financing scheme would break the rules, but she chose to go ahead anyway and needlessly waste an extra \$4 billion. Why is the Premier breaking the rules, wasting billions of dollars and destroying public trust in government just so she can win an election?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I confess to making an error. I should have deferred it through the Acting Premier the first time, so I will give it to the Acting Premier to give it back to the Minister of Energy if he wishes.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Let me be clear, and let's talk about what two world-class accounting firms had to say in statements about rate-regulated accounting within the public sector accounting standards. KPMG said, "On the basis of our extensive research, deliberations and an opinion from another major accounting firm, we believe that the accounting policies adopted by IESO are in ac-

cordance with Canadian public sector accounting standards.”

Deloitte “concluded that any regulatory assets and liabilities recognized through the appropriate application of these policies would meet the criteria for recognition” under the Canadian public sector accounting standards. Additionally, Ernst and Young is OPG’s financial auditor and is consulted on an ongoing basis.

Talking about wasting billions of dollars, their plan is to buy back millions of shares in Hydro One, and it will not take one cent off electricity bills for Ontario families. They voted against the fair hydro plan. We reduced rates by 25%.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Ms. Deborah Matthews: My question is for the Attorney General. We’ve known for a long time about the overrepresentation of indigenous people, racialized people and marginalized people in our justice system. This is a big concern for myself, for our colleagues and, I know, for the Attorney General. The current system seems to exclusively look at criminal behaviour and not at contributing factors, such as homelessness, poverty, mental health or addiction issues. There is, very simply, a lack of a holistic approach.

I think we need to ask ourselves, how can we start taking a person-centred approach and help address some of the underlying factors that may be causing people to engage in criminal behaviour? I know that in the recent budget, we announced a new project called community justice centres, and I’d like to ask the Attorney General, please, to explain how they will lead to a more holistic approach for people—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Attorney General.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I thank the member for this important question. Speaker, Ontario is moving forward with creating community justice centres to provide a new and innovative approach to criminal justice that increases access to justice services while reducing barriers faced by vulnerable people, especially people suffering from mental health and addiction issues.

Community justice centres move justice out of the traditional courtroom and into a community setting to help connect individuals to critical services that address the root causes of crime, before, during and after entry into the justice system. These centres are hubs that bring together services—justice, health, mental health and addictions, housing and social services—tailored to the unique needs of individual communities.

Community justice centres will strive to ensure that each point of contact with the police or justice system can be an opportunity to provide meaningful intervention that reduces the likelihood of further offending or victimization. This is part of Ontario’s commitment to work together to provide efficient and effective services to communities.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the Attorney General for his answer, but also for making this a priority.

Speaker, I’m very optimistic. We’ve seen CJsCs, community justice centres, established in over 70 different communities around the world. There is very strong evidence that they reduce recidivism, reduce reliance on incarceration and enhance community safety and well-being. It is especially important for me because, as the member for London North Centre, one of the three pilots will be located in my community.

In London, one third of charges laid in the city are committed by youth between the ages of 18 and 25. I’m very pleased to hear that each location will have community-specific models that will be set up to be best equipped to deal with the community they are located in.

Please, Attorney General, can you tell us how the three different community justice centres will reflect the communities they are placed in?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: After extensive consultation, our government has identified three community justice centre models in Kenora, London and Toronto’s Moss Park.

In Kenora, Ontario is planning to establish a bicultural community justice centre that has parallel criminal and restorative justice processes. These two streams would, for example, support increased indigenous leadership in the provision of traditional and restorative justice practices.

In Moss Park, Ontario will implement an urban community health and justice centre that focuses on improving the social determinants of health that can lead to contact with the criminal justice system.

In London, a youth-in-transition community justice hub will connect transition-aged young adults with critical supports at an early age and provide targeted interventions addressing the specific needs of that population.

Speaker, overall this is a \$14-million investment in our justice system, and I truly worry that if the Conservatives under Doug Ford were to be elected, with their promised billions in cuts, projects like these may be on the chopping—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr. Lorne Coe: My question is for the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development. The York University strike has now gone on for nearly two months, impacting more than 51,000 students. A letter from the vice-president academic posted recently to the university’s website said this: “If the strike does not end in time for winter term classes to resume by April 30 at the latest ... there will not be sufficient time ... to offer all of our summer terms.”

Speaker, will the minister finally take action to get the 51,000 students back into their classrooms?

Hon. Mitzi Hunter: I want to thank the member opposite for the question. This is obviously a very serious situation, as it affects and it impacts students. I would

like to remind the member opposite that York is still open and students are still attending classes, as they have been through the duration.

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That being said, this government has taken action. The Minister of Labour has appointed an experienced mediator to bring the sides together, to talk to each party and find a path to resolution. We are working on this issue and supporting both parties, because the best deal is a deal that is made at the table. We have been urging both sides to come to the table to resolve their issues—

Ms. Cindy Forster: The employer would have to go to the table.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Too many times. The member from Welland is warned.

Carry on, please.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: —and to find the compromise that is necessary in the best interests of the students of York University. We've been taking this as a very serious issue and have been working towards supporting both parties to come to a resolution, and we will continue to do so.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Back to the minister: This could be the last opportunity the Liberal government has to act to save the semester of tens of thousands of students and allow them to graduate in June. Classes are on the verge of being cancelled, and many students' summer job placements are at risk. Why does the minister continue to put thousands of students' lives on hold?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I'd like to inform the House, because the member opposite is not providing specific and correct information: York University has, in fact, put plans in place. They have been doing so for quite some time, starting, first and foremost, with keeping the university open so that students can attend classes. Just last week, they announced additional supports so students can either have an assessment on their term or, if they have experienced hardships, they can come to the university and receive the necessary supports.

Our concern, first and foremost, is for the students at York University. We are urging both sides that are involved in this to come back to the table, to get a deal that recognizes that both sides will have to compromise in order to reach a deal and put the needs of the students first.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, you will know that there are 20 hospitals in this province that are considered medium-sized hospitals. Timmins and District Hospital is one of those hospitals. When they heard the funding announcement that was made by your government, that supposedly hospitals were going to get 4.6% as an increase, they thought, "Well, this is going to go a long ways to helping us." The problem is, for those 20 medium-sized hospitals, because of your health system funding reform, the formu-

la works out such that Timmins and District Hospital doesn't get the full amount; it gets 0.9%. As a result, our hospital's looking at a deficit next year of close to \$5 million, which is going to be catastrophic when it comes to service delivery.

Minister, can you tell us what your plan is to address the shortfall in funding for these 20 medium-sized hospitals across the province, including Timmins and District Hospital?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: We made it very clear that when we talked about a 4.6% overall increase, we meant an average increase. There are many areas of this province with very high growth and tremendous population increases, and so this increase of 4.6% is an average.

Obviously, the smaller hospitals have not received necessarily that amount of an increase. The funding formula is being reviewed and has been reviewed in a manner to increase fairness and equity in terms of the number of patients served and the acuity of the cases. This is done in conjunction with our LHINs, and in conjunction with the Ontario Hospital Association as well. In fact, the president of that association co-chairs our funding review committee that is made up of representatives, including those from medium-sized hospitals.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: These are medium-sized hospitals; these are not the small ones. I'm not going to take issue with that. The point is, these hospitals are trying to provide services in an atmosphere where they've cut to the bone already. Timmins and District Hospital, as you well know, has done everything, including privatizing their sleep lab, in order to save about \$60,000 in an already \$66-million budget. These hospitals have done everything they can to trim out any kind of excesses they don't need, and we're seeing it when it comes to patient services.

You know as well as I do that in the system, when you look at hospital funding, the deficit that is incurred by these 20 hospitals is about \$400 million, and there is a surplus of about \$400 million with all of the other hospitals that they get in surpluses.

This is a question of shifting the dollars around to make sure that the money is evenly distributed so hospitals like TADH don't end up with a deficit and are treated like every other hospital in this province so that they can provide the services people need.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I do appreciate the great efforts of many hospitals in terms of finding efficiencies.

Actually, just at this point, I would like to give a shout-out to some of our amazing health care workers. My husband was at Southlake Regional Health Centre for six days last week. I can only say that our nurses, our doctors, the food lady—everybody just shows amazing caring, and I was so impressed by our wonderful health care workers. I just wanted to do that for a very important, caring group of people.

In terms of continuing to work with the funding formula, the member obviously has brought forward an issue that is of importance to the medium-sized hospitals.

We certainly are committed to continuing to work to ensure that the appropriate funding is there. It is certainly our commitment that we provide adequate funding for people to receive the type of care they need where they need it.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mrs. Cristina Martins: My question this morning is to the Minister of Education.

After inheriting an education system that was underfunded and in disrepair—a fact that was affirmed by the elementary teachers I met with in my office last week—our government has made it our top priority to invest in teachers, education workers, students and our publicly funded education system. The focus is to support the people of Ontario, including all students and thousands of staff who support student success.

Ontario is an international leader in education. We're building new schools in Ontario communities, and we're investing in school-based mental health supports and additional supports for students with special needs.

Minister, could you please share what our government is doing to support student achievement and their well-being?

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Thank you to the member for this important question.

Our government is making historic investments in education, including \$625 million more in education supports in this upcoming year, bringing our investment in education to a historic \$24.5 billion. This funding will add 2,000 more education workers in our schools, so that children will have access to more mental health workers, guidance counsellors and education assistants.

We are also equipping students with mental health supports in education, such as coping and resiliency skills, as early as kindergarten, and we're increasing investments in art education to \$21 million. This speaks to our top priority of supporting student well-being. In fact, since 2003, our government has added 40,000 education workers to our publicly funded education system. These investments in education are so important for student well-being and will go where students and educators need it most.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Again to the Minister of Education: I'm proud to represent a government that cares and is committed to providing opportunity to the people of Ontario, and access to mental health workers was highlighted by the teachers I met with last week as being paramount for student success.

What's clear is that, when we hear talk of "efficiencies" across the aisle, we know that means "cuts." We can't afford to go back to a time where education was on the chopping block. In fact, cutting just \$1 billion from our schools means thousands of teachers and education workers would be fired. I know that our government is focused on care, not cuts, by providing much-needed

investments in special education, mental health and an increase in guidance counsellors in our schools.

Minister, can you tell us more about how investments in education are supporting Ontario students?

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Thanks again to the member for this important question.

This \$24.5-billion investment will mean so much for staff and students. Instead of making cuts, we are making a clear choice to invest in helping our students achieve excellence in Ontario's schools. We are providing enveloped, permanent funding of \$300 million over three years to support students with special needs. This funding will clear special education assessment backlogs and wait times while reducing stress on parents, educators and students. Just think about that.

In addition to more staff, we will be able to support students across the province. This includes social workers, psychologists, speech-language pathologists.

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Speaker, on this side of the House, we know that we need to invest in our students and invest in our school system, and make sure our children are on a strong path to success.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Acting Premier.

Front-line mental health care and addictions workers are feeling and struggling with an increasing burden every day in this province. In many places in Ontario, many of those struggling with mental health and addictions don't know where to go for help.

In my riding, in Nipissing, some head to the Nipissing district social services board office, which is at city hall in North Bay. One man showed up there last week and promptly collapsed in the hall, unresponsive. EMS was called, and he was rushed to the hospital. You can imagine how traumatic this was for the staff and for clients who were present at the same time. After 15 years, we shouldn't be at this point.

To the Acting Premier, I ask, is this really the legacy the Liberals want to leave?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Of course, we have increased our investments in mental health and addictions dramatically through all the years that we have been involved in government. Our investment in the 2018 budget is a historic investment of some \$2.1 billion. It's the largest investment in Canadian history in mental health and addiction services.

We don't know much about the PCs' plan, but we do know that the leader of the official opposition has said that he is going to cut funding for supervised injection sites. This is obviously an addiction issue. We know that these harm reduction sites provide wraparound services for some of our most vulnerable people, supports that are saving hundreds of lives.

So before the member opposite questions our budget, I'd like to hear a little bit more about what they are considering to do about mental health and addictions, other than cutting the budget.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the Acting Premier: The opioid crisis is well documented, and deaths continue to rise to all-time highs in Ontario—more than 1,000 people last year alone.

In the North East LHIN, which encompasses my riding of Nipissing, opioid abuse cases and mental health disorders are double the provincial average. The CAO of the Nipissing district social services board believes the local situation is a crisis. The board chair says, “Too many vulnerable people in our district are suffering needlessly....” They are asking our North East LHIN to establish and help lead a district crisis task force.

To the Acting Premier: Will the Minister of Health direct the North East LHIN to work with our local officials and finally take action on this?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Speaker, I'm having real difficulty reconciling the question from the member opposite with his leader's comments, most recently this last week.

Of course, we've been extremely conscious of the opioid crisis. This is why we're investing \$222 million over three years to combat the opioid crisis. Part of our strategy has been expanding harm reduction services, hiring more front-line staff and improving access to addiction supports across the province. We have made naloxone kits available to pharmacies, public health units and police and fire services, and we're now making an easy-to-use nasal spray available.

Mr. Speaker, we are doing everything that we possibly can to combat this public health crisis. We will continue to do so. And I will take no lessons from the member opposite on this file.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Cindy Forster: My question is to the Acting Premier.

The people who built this province and built our communities deserve comfort and dignity as they age, but too many people in my riding—the Welland riding—and across Ontario cannot get the seniors' care that they need. Over 32,000 people are on the wait-lists for long-term care. And too many people simply cannot get the seniors' care they need. They can't get it in their own language. They can't get their own foods and cultural activities that they've lived their entire lives to get.

Why has the Premier forced seniors to wait longer for long-term care than they need to?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: We certainly acknowledge that we have a collective responsibility to support our seniors and to ensure the very best quality of life. That is why our government has almost doubled funding for long-term care since 2003.

As health care advancements continue, our population is living longer and developing care needs that are becoming increasingly complex. So, in our most recent budget, the 2018 budget, we're investing \$300 million over three years to increase staffing in long-term care. This is, of course, in addition to our announcement of 5,000 new long-term-care beds over the next four years.

We are working hard to ensure our seniors live in safety and dignity, and we will continue to do so.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Well, after 15 very long years, anything this government wanted to do, they could have and should have done already. But since this government took office 15 years ago, the problems in seniors' care have gotten worse, not better. Wait times for long-term care have increased by 270%, and families in my riding, the Welland riding, are stuck waiting for care for their grandparents and their parents.

With just 45 days left in office, does the Premier regret not making seniors' care a priority and leaving seniors across Ontario without the care that they've badly needed?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Through the years, our plan for health care has been extremely comprehensive. The member opposite will know that seniors do like to stay in their own home for as long as possible. Our Aging At Home Strategy a number of years ago increased funding for home care, and we have continued to increase that each and every year.

When it becomes, unfortunately, necessary for people to leave their homes, we have strengthened our retirement home community with new regulations in terms of safety and so on. We, of course, have announced our expansion of long-term-care beds, some 30,000 new beds over the next decade, and we're continuing to rebuild and refurbish long-term-care beds across the province as well.

We have a comprehensive plan. We will continue to ensure our seniors live in safety and dignity.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: My question is for the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. Last week was Earth Week, and yesterday was Earth Day. To celebrate, I encouraged community members in my own riding of Etobicoke North to take actions like recycling and taking public transport, as well as reducing energy consumption.

I'd also like to compliment the leader of the opposition, Doug Ford, for perhaps his only initiative on greenhouse gas reduction, and that is hiding from the press and getting rid of the media bus that would accompany him across Ontario. I believe that will save on greenhouse gas emissions all around.

In Ontario, we're making it easier for everyone to do their part by investing billions in green programs, including \$94 million in cycling infrastructure and hundreds of millions of dollars in energy efficiency retrofits for homes, schools, hospitals, social housing and beyond. Our cap on pollution is \$2.4 billion and counting.

Despite the unseasonable weather—cold when it's hot, hot when it's cold, unseasonable flooding—there is a complete denial of climate change on the other side.

I'd ask the minister to please address our government's programs in this area.

Hon. Chris Ballard: Thank you to the member from Etobicoke North for that question, which asks so many questions. I wish I had a lot more time to answer them all.

I can tell you that on this side of the House, we take the environment very seriously. A cornerstone of our protection of the environment is our protection and our fight against climate change. That means our cap-and-trade system that we have here in Ontario, which in its first year reduced industrial greenhouse gas pollution and raised \$2.4 billion in proceeds, every penny of which we are reinvesting into programs to further reduce greenhouse gas pollution across Ontario.

I don't think getting rid of the media bus is a good idea. It takes transparency away. They can't ask the members opposite if they believe in climate change.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock on a point of order.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'd like to introduce some family here from Winnipeg, Manitoba: my niece Teresa Lyons and her friend Cole. Welcome to the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

DEFERRED VOTES

ACCESS TO CONSUMER CREDIT REPORTS AND ELEVATOR AVAILABILITY ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018 SUR L'ACCÈS AU RAPPORT DE SOLVABILITÉ DU CONSOMMATEUR ET LA DISPONIBILITÉ DES ASCENSEURS

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 8, An Act to amend the Consumer Reporting Act and the Technical Standards and Safety Act, 2000 /
Projet de loi 8, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les renseignements concernant le consommateur et la Loi de 2000 sur les normes techniques et la sécurité.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1140 to 1145.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On April 12, 2018, Ms. MacCharles moved second reading of Bill 8, An Act to amend the Consumer Reporting Act and the Technical Standards and Safety Act, 2000.

All those in favour please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Fraser, John	Moridi, Reza
Anderson, Granville	Gates, Wayne	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Arnott, Ted	Gretzky, Lisa	Naqvi, Yasir
Bailey, Robert	Hardeman, Ernie	Nicholls, Rick
Baker, Yvan	Hatfield, Percy	Oosterhoff, Sam
Ballard, Chris	Hoggarth, Ann	Pettapiece, Randy
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hunter, Mitzie	Potts, Arthur
Bisson, Gilles	Jaczek, Helena	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bradley, James J.	Jones, Sylvia	Rinaldi, Lou
Chan, Michael	Kiwala, Sophie	Sandals, Liz
Chiarelli, Bob	Lalonde, Marie-France	Sattler, Peggy
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Leal, Jeff	Scott, Laurie
Clark, Steve	MacCharles, Tracy	Smith, Todd
Coe, Lorne	Malhi, Harinder	Sousa, Charles
Colle, Mike	Mangat, Amrit	Tabuns, Peter
Coteau, Michael	Mantha, Michael	Takhar, Harinder S.
Crack, Grant	Martins, Cristina	Taylor, Monique
Del Duca, Steven	Martow, Gila	Thibeault, Glenn
Delaney, Bob	Matthews, Deborah	Thompson, Lisa M.
Des Rosiers, Nathalie	Mauro, Bill	Vanthof, John
Dhillon, Vic	McDonnell, Jim	Wilson, Jim
Dong, Han	McGarry, Kathryn	Wong, Soo
Duguid, Brad	McMahon, Eleanor	Yakabuski, John
Fedeli, Victor	McMeekin, Ted	Yurek, Jeff
Fife, Catherine	McNaughton, Monte	Zimmer, David
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Milczyn, Peter Z.	
Forster, Cindy	Miller, Norm	

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 79; the nays are 0.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to the order of the House dated April 19, 2018, the bill is referred to the Standing Committee on General Government.

TIME ALLOCATION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have a deferred vote on government notice of motion number 7, relating to the allocation of time on Bill 31, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various statutes.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On April 19, 2018, Mr. Ballard moved government notice of motion number 7, relating to the allocation of time on Bill 31, an Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various statutes.

All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Duguid, Brad	McMahon, Eleanor
Anderson, Granville	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	McMeekin, Ted
Baker, Yvan	Fraser, John	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Ballard, Chris	Hoggarth, Ann	Moridi, Reza
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hunter, Mitzie	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Bradley, James J.	Jaczek, Helena	Naqvi, Yasir
Chan, Michael	Kiwala, Sophie	Potts, Arthur
Chiarelli, Bob	Lalonde, Marie-France	Qaadri, Shafiq
Colle, Mike	Leal, Jeff	Rinaldi, Lou
Coteau, Michael	MacCharles, Tracy	Sandals, Liz

Crack, Grant
Del Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
Des Rosiers, Nathalie
Dhillon, Vic
Dong, Han

Malhi, Harinder
Mangat, Amrit
Martins, Cristina
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McGarry, Kathryn

Sousa, Charles
Takhar, Harinder S.
Thibeault, Glenn
Vernile, Daiene
Wong, Soo
Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Bisson, Gilles
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon
Clark, Steve
Coe, Lorne
Fedeli, Victor
Fife, Catherine
Forster, Cindy
Gates, Wayne
Gretzky, Lisa

Hardeman, Ernie
Hatfield, Percy
Jones, Sylvia
Mantha, Michael
Martow, Gila
McDonnell, Jim
McNaughton, Monte
Miller, Norm
Nicholls, Rick
Oosterhoff, Sam
Pettapiece, Randy

Sattler, Peggy
Scott, Laurie
Smith, Todd
Tabuns, Peter
Taylor, Monique
Thompson, Lisa M.
Vanthof, John
Wilson, Jim
Yakabuski, John
Yurek, Jeff

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 48; the nays are 32.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no further deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1151 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Harinder S. Takhar: I would like to introduce two of my constituency staff, Gurdeep Dhaliwal and Bal Takhar. They have both worked in my constituency of Mississauga–Erindale for the last 11 years or even more. They do a great job serving constituents day in and day out. They are here today to join us for the celebration of Vaisakhi in Queen's Park.

Speaker, on that issue I also want to say to all members that we are celebrating Vaisakhi in room 268, and we would like to invite each and every member to come and join us from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Welcome.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

FACE OFF FOR MENTAL HEALTH

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from—Sarnia–Lambton.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's my privilege to rise in the Legislature and speak briefly today about a unique program in my Sarnia–Lambton riding called Face Off for Mental Health which I hope will eventually be adopted by other regions across Ontario.

St. Clair Child and Youth Services launched this exciting campaign last year with the aim of raising awareness of mental health through local hockey associations. The goal of the program is to make hockey arenas and dressing rooms a safe place to talk about mental health. Each of the associations hosted a Face Off for Mental Health Awareness Weekend where teams from mite to midgets taped their sticks green in support of mental health.

Information about local mental health resources was available in arenas and over 2,600 registered players were provided with a hockey puck featuring helpline information. Additionally, each association made it mandatory for their bench staff to participate in a mental health education workshop.

With the issue of mental health becoming more and more recognized in our province, especially among young people, I commend St. Clair Child and Youth Services for introducing this great program in Sarnia–Lambton.

Using the popularity of hockey as a way of bringing youth mental health issues to the forefront, I'm very gratified to see the success of Face Off for Mental Health during its first year. I'm hoping that next season the program can continue to grow, not only in my riding but across the province as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I apologize to the member. When his desk moved, I looked at it and—what, what, what?

Further members' statements?

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'm rising today to talk about an issue I've talked about many times in this House: the outrageous compensation of Hydro One CEO Mayo Schmidt. Over a year ago, I spoke against this ridiculous \$4-million salary of Mayo Schmidt. Since then, he has gotten a raise and is paid \$6 million.

Mayo Schmidt told us that he feels the pain of people struggling with high hydro bills. How can anyone feel that pain when you're raking in \$6 million?

It's important to note that the NDP has long advocated for a cap on public sector CEO salaries. In 2013, the NDP brought forward a bill to cap public sector executive pay at \$418,000. The NDP brought forward legislation several times that would have capped public sector CEO salaries. The PC caucus all voted against it and ultimately defeated the bill. It's incredibly unfortunate that that bill did not pass.

Mr. Speaker, 80% of Ontarians do not support the sell-off of Hydro One. They didn't support the Conservatives either when they started the privatization.

I've said it before and I'll say it again: Selling Hydro One is the biggest mistake this government has ever made. Without control of Hydro One, we cannot—we cannot—tackle the issue of outrageous executive salaries. We need to buy back Hydro One and bring it back into

public hands to protect Ontarians who are struggling to pay their hydro bills.

Only the NDP has a plan to do that and protect Ontarians.

VAISAKHI

Mr. Harinder S. Takhar: On April 14, many Ontarians practising the Sikh faith celebrated the historical and religious festival known as Vaisakhi. It is a very important celebration of the beginning of a new solar year, the spring harvest, as well as the birth of Khalsa in 1699, when Guru Gobind Singh introduced the five K's, which included the five items that Khalsa Sikhs must wear at all times. The five K's, along with the turban, became the most visible symbol of Sikhism.

Vaisakhi is celebrated in all corners of our province and right here in Toronto, as well as in neighbouring cities like Mississauga and Brampton. Nagar Kirtans, also known as Khalsa Day parades, will be held.

Many volunteers will help to make these events a success, which reminds me of the dedication that volunteers all over Ontario exhibit in helping to make this a better province to live in. Coincidentally, it was National Volunteer Week last weekend, and I would like to acknowledge everyone who devotes their time to improving their communities.

In a multicultural society, celebrations such as Nagar Kirtans are important in establishing an understanding of each other's faiths and cultures. As such, I am very pleased that during Sikh Heritage Month in April, so many people came together to celebrate Vaisakhi and will come together to take part in Nagar Kirtans and be witness to the positive impact that the Sikh community has made in our great province.

Mr. Speaker, I had introduced my staff before who are here to attend the Vaisakhi function. They are here in the Legislature now. I really want to say thanks to them because they have done a tremendous job of serving the residents of Mississauga–Erindale.

LEEDS, GRENVILLE AND LANARK DISTRICT HEALTH UNIT

Mr. Randy Hillier: I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit for being recognized as a Best Practice Spotlight Organization by the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario. The RNAO designates health care and academic institutions as a Best Practice Spotlight Organization when they effectively implement and evaluate RNAO best practice guidelines.

The health unit programs are: enhancing healthy adolescent development; working with families to promote safe sleep for infants aged zero to 12 months; integrating smoking cessation into daily nursing practices; interventions for postpartum depression; and person- and family-centred care. These are the practice guidelines they would focus on during this period.

Their hard work has paid off, and now they will be recognized and designated by the RNAO. This is a wonderful recognition for the many staff involved in the project, but also important for all members of the local community, who will see a direct impact and improvement in the health care services offered to them.

I applaud the health unit's success and wish them the very, very best at their celebration tomorrow evening.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Ms. Jennifer K. French: This past Friday night, I was out on the road with Durham region police officers from the human trafficking division on a ride-along that went into the early morning. We spent 12 hours in the tangled and terrifying world of sex trafficking. My soul is still trying to file what I have seen and learned.

We can never appreciate our police enough for what they do, and I do not know how they are able to handle what they do. Thank God for these officers and the social workers who are committed to helping our girls who have been taken and are being controlled and sold for sex by the hour after hour after hour, until they can escape.

I met a survivor who was able to get out after nine years because of a police intervention that offered her a way out with the support she needed. She and a worker from a local women's shelter are working to support other young women, when and if we can get to them, working alongside our officers.

Speaker, this is a world of fear and control. Girls in high school are being trafficked by their boyfriend pimps in the evenings and weekends, and go to school like usual during the day. Parents don't recognize branding tattoos or second phones or boyfriend pimps for the signs that they are.

I saw hundreds of ads being placed in the middle of the afternoon to sell girls to predators in normal hotel rooms all along our 401: men who stop in for half an hour on their way to work in the morning; men who pay for after-game hotel parties and don't ask where the girls come from; men who go home to their families.

I met a young woman who is still in this hell, where she has survived for 10 years, who trusted us with the story of her nightmare, but she doesn't believe she can get out. To her and the hundreds of other girls in this web: Not everyone wants to hurt you. Call the police. Let them get you out.

And to the neighbours in our communities and guests at our hotels: Recognize what you are seeing. Help our girls. Help end sex trafficking. Call the police or call Crime Stoppers.

NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY AND CHILDREN'S DAY

Mr. John Fraser: Today, Monday, April 23, Turkish Canadians celebrate National Sovereignty and Children's Day. In 1920, the new Turkish republic dedicated the day to the world's children in recognition that the next

generation will be the successor of the future. The declaration symbolizes that Turkish youth have been trusted to protect the sovereignty and independence of their nation.

1310

Every year, schools host week-long ceremonies, including performances in fields and large stadiums. Today, children will replace government officials and high-ranking civil servants by working in their offices.

Children from all over the world are invited to attend special parliamentary sessions in the Grand National Assembly to discuss issues that concern children across the country and around the globe. Children then pledge their commitment to international peace and friendship.

UNICEF has also recognized and declared April 23rd as International Children's Day. This is a truly unique and wonderful tradition that continues to unite us all.

I'd like to say a special thank you to the Turkish Canadian community in Ottawa, who hosted their annual gala and dinner in honour of Children's Day. They've raised over \$90,000 over the years for the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario in my riding.

TAMMIE JO SHULTS

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm really pleased to rise today and just talk about—I think a lot of our hearts have been thumping ever since we heard about the pilot who landed the plane last week, with a window that had blown out. Tammie Jo Shults was at the controls of Dallas-bound flight 1380 for Southwest Airlines when it made an emergency landing in Philadelphia. The jet had apparently blown out an engine, got hit by shrapnel and a window got blown out.

She's credited for having nerves of steel and helping to prevent a far worse tragedy. She took the plane into a rapid descent. The passengers had to don the oxygen masks. There are even some videos circulating out there from somebody who taped it.

I just wanted to mention that pilot Shults was among the first female fighter pilots in the US military. I want to thank our military for training so many of our great commercial pilots. We all have gone on planes, and sometimes we marvel at the experience that we're able to actually fly. She's really credited as somebody who really pushed to get into the military academy, to be able to learn and to train.

I just wanted to thank her on behalf of myself and my constituents, and I'm sure all the members here as well, and to remind everybody to please wear their seat belts, because, unfortunately, the passenger who passed away—it would have been even worse for her family. She was half out of the airplane, but the seat belt held her in.

We know that planes can be very bumpy and very dangerous and emergencies can happen. I remind everybody, on behalf of all of us here in the Legislature: Please wear your seat belts when you're seated on an aircraft.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mrs. Cristina Martins: On Friday, April 20, I had the distinct pleasure of welcoming Minister Sousa to Via Norte Restaurant in my riding of Davenport to announce that the province has committed to building 256 new long-term-care beds that will offer specialized care to aging Portuguese Canadian communities.

The beds will be in a long-term-care facility called Magellan Community Care, or Casa Magalhães, named after the Portuguese explorer and navigator, and will be tailored for residents with roots in Portugal, Brazil, Angola, Mozambique, Cabo Verde and other Portuguese-speaking parts of the world.

As a proud Portuguese Canadian, I know first-hand the Portuguese community forms of lifeblood of this neighbourhood. Our Portuguese seniors quite literally built this community from the ground up.

Over the last four years as MPP and long before that, I heard fierce advocacy from my community on the pressing need to establish long-term-care facilities that cater to Ontarians with Portuguese language roots. Magellan Community Care will allow Portuguese seniors to better access high-quality care and continue to live happy and healthy lives, all while accessing services and programs in Portuguese.

As our population ages, creating comforting spaces for our elders is more than simply providing medical treatment. Long-term care is about engaging elderly individuals on a human level that allows them to connect with the people around them, unfettered by language barriers.

This announcement is part of the province's commitment to build 5,000 new beds by 2022 and more than 30,000 new beds over the next decade. I am proud to be part of a government that values our elders and is committed to establishing environments where Ontarians can all age.

YOUNG CANADA WEEK

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Last month, I was happy to attend the 69th annual Young Canada peewee hockey tournament hosted by the Goderich Lions Club. The tournament has been hosted since 1950 and has drawn girls' and boys' teams from across Ontario. This year, the tournament had 22 teams from western and southwestern Ontario.

The tournament has a storied history. Countless future hockey stars have participated in the past. It's great to see that in looking ahead to our young hockey players, time has been taken to celebrate the past as well. This year, the Stratford Y's Men were honoured during the opening ceremony for winning the tournament back in 1969.

There's another fun piece of trivia about the Young Canada Week tournament. I once had an opportunity to meet with Wayne Gretzky, and when I told him that the riding I represented was the great riding of Huron-Bruce, the moment he realized I represented Goderich, his face actually lit up as he remembered playing in Young

Canada Week. I share that story because who knows how many more participants will be the next Great One, going through the Goderich Lions Club hockey tournament, known as Young Canada Week?

I would like to thank all the parents who make this opportunity possible for their young hockey players, who I am positive had lots of fun. Thank you to the Goderich Lions Club, to the president, Dave McDonald, and lastly to all the volunteers who make this week happen year in and year out.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. He happened to score a lot of goals on that weekend too. I just wanted to let you know—the guy from Brantford.

ESTIMATES

Hon. Eleanor McMahon: I have a message from the Honourable Elizabeth Dowdeswell, the Lieutenant Governor, signed by her own hand.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please rise.

The Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required for the services of the province for the year ending March 31, 2019, and recommends them to the Legislative Assembly. Toronto, April 20, 2018. Elizabeth Dowdeswell.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ORGANIC PRODUCTS ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018

SUR LES PRODUITS BIOLOGIQUES

Mr. Tabuns moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 59, An Act to regulate the labelling and certification of organic products / Projet de loi 59, Loi visant à réglementer l'étiquetage et la certification des produits biologiques.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: This bill has been co-sponsored by the member from Dufferin—Caledon. It prohibits the marketing and labelling of products as “organic” unless they have been certified as organic in accordance with the act.

FAMILY CAREGIVER DAY ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018 SUR LE JOUR DES AIDANTS NATURELS

Madame Gélinas moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 60, An Act to proclaim Family Caregiver Day / Projet de loi 60, Loi proclamant le Jour des aidants naturels.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It will be very short, Speaker. The bill proclaims the first Tuesday in April of each year as Family Caregiver Day.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you—very short.

1320

FRENCH LANGUAGE SERVICES IN MPP CONSTITUENCY OFFICES ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018 SUR LES SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS DANS LES BUREAUX DE CIRCONSCRIPTION DES DÉPUTÉS

Madame Gélinas moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 61, An Act to amend the French Language Services Act with respect to the provision of services in French / Projet de loi 61, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services en français en ce qui concerne la prestation des services en français.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Les articles 1 et 7 et le paragraphe 5 de la Loi sur les services en français sont modifiés en vue de rendre cette dernière applicable aux bureaux de circonscription des députés à l'Assemblée législative.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

SIKH HERITAGE MONTH

Hon. Harinder Malhi: I'm pleased to rise today to mark Sikh Heritage Month in Ontario. I'm deeply honoured to recognize this important occasion. In January, the Premier appointed me the Minister of the Status of Women in Ontario. In fact, I became the first Sikh woman to hold a cabinet position in Ontario in 151 years. It is a role and responsibility that I take very seriously.

The month of April was proclaimed as Sikh Heritage Month by the Legislature of Ontario in 2013—Bill 52. Unanimously supported by the Liberals, Conservatives and the NDP, the proclamation of April as Sikh Heritage Month recognizes the important contributions that Sikh Canadians have made to Ontario's social, economic, political and cultural fabric.

This month is an opportunity to remember, observe and educate our future generations and society at large about Sikh Canadians and the important role that we play in communities across Ontario.

Sikh Heritage Month aims to celebrate the contributions and aspirations of all Sikh Canadians and develop a greater understanding and appreciation for a rich, unique and diverse heritage.

Some of the tenets of my faith that I hold dear include equality, truthfulness, tolerance, honesty and respect for all. These are important pillars for a civil society, a place where we can all work together to build up communities. My role as minister is informed by this. I believe that the work I'm doing is building a fairer and more equitable province. I'm honoured to be a part of a government that values diversity and fights for equality. I'm dedicated to building a society where everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed.

In my role as the Minister of the Status of Women, I work very hard to address and break down the barriers that hold women back. I work hard to celebrate diversity and encourage equality and equity for all. Some of our most recent work highlights our government's commitment to equal and fair opportunity for all Ontarians. It's Never Okay, Ontario's strategy to end gender-based violence, was an investment of close to \$242 million, and it aims to create a system that better responds to the growing demands for services for survivors of gender-based violence.

We know that gender-based violence can happen to anyone, but the risk is even greater for racialized, indigenous and newcomer women, members of the LGBTQ2 community and women with disabilities. That's why we put this important strategy forward.

Then Now Next: Ontario's Strategy for Women's Economic Empowerment is the first of its kind in Canada. It aims to eliminate barriers and make workplaces more equitable and accessible for women and men equally.

Speaker, I grew up in a family that was very politically active. I've always believed that the role of government is to provide people with the opportunity to realize their full potential. It is our role to recognize the value in engaging with as many different voices as we can.

Like many children of immigrants, my parents came to this country from India, and they worked many long hours to build a comfortable life for me and my brother. But they never lost sight of what was important, and for them, that was helping people.

When my father entered public life in 1993, it was with the trust and support of his community. He became the first turbaned politician to be elected outside of India. By the age of 12, I was helping my father knock on doors around Brampton. Our home bustled with neighbours. Sometimes they were there to seek help, and other times to complain. I watched my father work tirelessly to serve his community. It is from my parents that I learned the value of listening. I learned the true meaning of "community," and it is a sense of community that lies at the foundation of Sikhism.

Guru Nanak Singh Ji started Sikhism as a social revolution, a faith based on principles of equality and social justice. The Sikh community is based on these fundamentals, including faith, unity and equality for all.

As the Minister of the Status of Women, these are the same fundamental values that drive the work that I do every day to achieve an equitable Ontario for women and girls, for now and for the future.

In Sikhism, we have a very important philosophy called Seva. It means selfless service, completed as a community action. It is performed for the goodwill and benefit of others. It is also done with no expectation of reward. You see, the reward is the act itself, because generosity and kindness are infectious. The concept of Seva is, however, more than just action; it is the very essence of Sikhism.

When Sikhs began arriving in Canada in the late 1800s and early 1900s, they arrived on the west coast and worked the railway, lumber mills and mines. From these origins grew a vibrant and diverse group of men and women in this country. We now play a significant role in every aspect of Canadian life. We are politicians, lawyers, doctors, labourers, teachers and bankers. We have settled across every province, from British Columbia to Newfoundland. We have made this great nation richer.

As we celebrate Sikh Heritage Month, we should remind ourselves of how many Sikhs have found success here in Ontario, in so many fields and professions. Sikh Canadians represent a growing and dynamic population making significant contributions to the growth and prosperity of Ontario.

I'm proud to stand before you today as a Sikh Canadian and recognize the most important contributions that Sikhs have made to Ontario's social, economic, political and cultural fabric.

I want to speak to you about one such hero, Buckam Singh, the first Sikh to enlist for World War I with an Ontario battalion. He was wounded twice in France and died in Canada in 1919. He is buried at Mount Hope Cemetery in Kitchener. His tombstone is the only known Canadian Sikh soldier's grave in existence.

These days, Canadian Sikhs are breaking down barriers and forging their own paths, people like Jagjeet Singh Hans, also known as Tiger Jeet Singh, who rose to prominence as a professional wrestler. He went on to be almost as well known for his humanitarian work as he was known in the ring. There is an elementary school in his hometown of Milton, Ontario, named after him.

Sikhs have also made their mark and found great success in public service, serving in the House of Commons, the Ontario Legislature and on municipal councils across the province. Gurbax Singh Malhi, my father, became the first-ever turban-wearing politician to be elected in North America when he was elected to the House of Commons in 1993.

In 2016, Sarabjit Singh Marwah became the first Sikh appointed to the Canadian Senate. He is the former vice-chairman and chief operating officer of Scotiabank, retiring in 2014 after 35 years with the bank, where he began his career as a financial analyst.

In October 2017, Jagmeet Singh became the first member of a visible minority to lead a major federal party. The criminal lawyer, originally from Scarborough,

had been an MPP since 2011 and the Ontario NDP's deputy leader since 2015.

Herb Dhaliwal was the first Sikh minister in Canada's federal cabinet.

Speaker, the list goes on.

I am a Sikh Canadian, MPP for Brampton–Springdale and the Minister of the Status of Women. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize my fellow Sikh members. The honourable members from Brampton West and, of course, from Mississauga–Erindale—our very first Sikh cabinet minister in Ontario—and our member from Brampton South are also Sikhs and long-serving MPPs in this Legislature who have blazed the path.

Mr. Speaker, we now know that our province is made even stronger through the diversity that immigration creates. I believe many Sikhs are attracted to this province because we value diversity, independence, freedom and equality. We are extremely fortunate to reap the benefits of the different cultures and peoples that make up our province, and Sikhs are prominent among these.

In closing, I want to thank my fellow Sikh brothers and sisters for their immeasurable contributions to this province. To all, I hope that you have a joyous Sikh Heritage Month.

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

Hon. Laura Albanese: Last week was National Volunteer Week. People across Ontario honoured and thanked the volunteers who have such a positive impact in their communities. Almost five million people generously donate their time and talents every year to a variety of programs, services and causes here in Ontario. Our province would be a much lesser place without the efforts of our volunteers to support people and make their communities a better place. Our volunteers deserve our recognition, our support and heartfelt thanks.

1330

During National Volunteer Week, I had the honour of recognizing our volunteers, including awarding the June Callwood Outstanding Achievement Award for Volunteering to 12 outstanding individuals in four different organizations. I was also on hand, on April 19, to honour the 10 winners of this year's Ontario Medal for Young Volunteers.

As many of you know, the annual volunteer service awards ceremonies have been happening in communities across the province since March 19. It will continue until May 1. Through the volunteer service awards this year, more than 8,100 volunteers are being recognized across the province at 57 ceremonies in 45 different communities for their outstanding community service.

This year also saw important changes to our government's ChangeTheWorld program. Since 2008, over 240,000 youth volunteers have contributed more than 1.2 million volunteer hours in their communities through the previous ChangeTheWorld program. Our government has revised ChangeTheWorld to help provide more meaningful volunteer experiences for young people. The time frame for the program has been expanded from six

weeks in the spring to include volunteer activities throughout the entire year. We also broadened the age limit to include youth from the ages of 12 to 18. We have increased the program's reach by encouraging a wider range of organizations to consider delivering volunteer projects, and 32 projects worth \$1.2 million over two years have received funding to engage youth by promoting volunteerism and fostering a sense of community responsibility.

Volunteers play a critical and essential role in building strong communities. During National Volunteer Week and throughout the rest of the year, people across Ontario have a reason to be grateful for the efforts of our five million volunteers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's time for responses.

SIKH HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Norm Miller: Sat sri akal.

I'm proud to rise on behalf of Ontario PC leader Doug Ford and the Ontario PC caucus in celebration of Sikh Heritage Month. I want to apologize if I mispronounce anything in this response.

April marks an important time for the Sikh community. That is why, in 2013, when Bill 52 was introduced in the Ontario Legislature recognizing April as Sikh Heritage Month, the Ontario PC caucus proudly supported it. Along with being Sikh Heritage Month, April also marks the coming of the Vaisakhi festival, one of the most important days of the Sikh calendar. During Vaisakhi, the Sikh community reflects upon the past year and expresses gratitude for the blessings received, while together looking forward to the coming year.

Vaisakhi also celebrates the founding of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh Ji in 1699, and observes the participation of traditional Sikh practices, such as the introduction of the Sikh articles of faith also known as the five Ks. Vaisakhi showcases true Sikh values for humanity: a passion for justice, equality, integrity and compassion, which is shown through acts of Seva, or selfless service. Individuals perform acts of charity for those less fortunate, encourage service to others and also promote positivity. These values are embraced by the Ontario PC caucus and are principles that we hold dear to us.

With a community of over 200,000 strong in Ontario, Sikh Heritage Month provides an important opportunity for recognizing the many contributions Sikh Canadians play in vibrant communities all across this province. It is also a time to remember, celebrate and further educate future generations on Sikh achievements in business, politics, medicine and culture. Canadians of Sikh faith represent an amazing success story across our province, worthy of appreciation. Your resilient spirit inspires us all.

As Ontarians come together this month to celebrate Sikh heritage and Vaisakhi at various Nagar Kirtans across our province, it's my pleasure to convey to them this House's and the PC caucus's warmest wishes for a successful Sikh Heritage Month. Happy Vaisakhi. Vaisakhi di lakh lakh Vadhai.

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's my pleasure to rise on behalf of the PC caucus and offer my comments on volunteer week. Today is an opportunity to recognize and thank the people who give up their time to make our communities better every day.

It's not exaggeration to say that Ontario would be a very different place without the numerous hours volunteers have given to a cause they care about. The most recent data from Statistics Canada said that, in 2010, volunteers gave almost 2.7 billion hours to their communities through volunteering. That said, volunteers make an immeasurable impact on our communities.

I know, as we are wrapping up volunteer week this weekend, we heard the news in Orangeville that Kaden Young, the three-year-old who was lost on February 21, has been found—mercifully. I can't think about volunteers and what they do for our community without thinking about the literally hundreds of people who, every single day, have been going out trying to find this young man and bring closure to his family.

Two people in particular literally put their lives on hold for the last 60 days. Richard Croft and Derek Bennett have been actively organizing volunteer searches and organizing social media connections so everyone across Ontario who had any ability to come out and assist in the search were able to coordinate and connect with the family. It was incredible to see.

So it's somewhat fitting that, on the last day of the volunteer week in 2018, we finally brought Kaden home.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I appreciate that.

SIKH HERITAGE MONTH

Ms. Jennifer K. French: April is Sikh Heritage Month in Ontario. It was a 2013 bill passed by this House to ensure that we have a month every year to celebrate, educate and recognize the contributions of the Sikh community in Ontario. I'm glad to remind us that it was my friend and former colleague Jagmeet Singh who introduced this legislation five years ago.

Sikh Canadians have been in Canada for over 100 years. They have contributed to all of our fields and areas of focus in the province. Sikhs are active members of our society. They are also very visible members of our society, especially considering the visible principles of faith or articles of faith. But being visible, however, doesn't mean being understood. I appreciate our heritage months in the province because it is a time to learn and to appreciate more about our neighbours.

I'd like to read from the conversation here in this Legislature five years ago from the then member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton: "Sikh Heritage Month is so important. It gives us a platform so that we can talk about the contributions that Sikh Canadians have made. We can talk about what they are about, their beliefs and values, so that we can share in celebrating their diversity and create a society that is more accepting. It should be one of our goals as parliamentarians, to make sure we create a

society that is accepting of all people, and this could be one step towards creating a more accepting society for Sikh Canadians."

Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to highlight the contributions of Rupri Kaur today. Rupri Kaur is a Punjabi Sikh who came to Canada from India and grew up in Brampton. She has become a celebrated poet and woman of impact and influence for youth and young women—and the not-so-young. I discovered Rupri Kaur years ago and have dog-eared the relatable pages of her books. When I discovered her, I discovered myself and the stories of my friends and loved ones reflected in her pages. Most others discovered her work through social media. Her appeal as a poet, though, is not dependent on the platform she uses, but is due to the shared complex emotions that fill her words and poems. As she has said, "People want to feel understood." Themes of her works include sexual violence, trauma, and everyday moments of joy or of torment.

Heritage months help us to learn to accept and to grow. I'd like to share one of Rupri's poems:

To hate
Is an easy lazy thing
But to love
Takes strength
Everyone has
But not all are
Willing to practise

Speaker, may we all practise a little more love and share ideas and understanding with those around us. On behalf of Ontario's New Democrats, we hope everyone enjoys and appreciates Sikh Heritage Month this year.

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Today we are marking National Volunteer Week and taking the time to say thank you. Today I have the opportunity to rise and speak as the critic for citizenship and immigration on behalf of Ontario's New Democrats. Citizenship is about civic participation and involvement. It is about how people live in and join in activities in their neighbourhoods and communities.

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People choose to participate in so many ways. Maybe they get involved in their churches, their service clubs, through their children's activities. They join an interest group, engage politically or enjoy their public spaces and facilities. They work, they explore, they advocate, they enjoy, and, fortunately for the rest of us, they volunteer.

Every year we celebrate and recognize volunteers from across our communities at the volunteer service awards. Volunteers from across communities are recognized for their service, their commitment, their time, their dedication, their heart, their soul and their love for their community.

The volunteer service awards and our own Leading Women, Leading Girls awards night were wonderful. They were nights of smiles, appreciation and celebration,

and something very special to be a part of. It is always nice to see our volunteers formally recognized.

It is my privilege to be an MPP representing Oshawa. All of us in this House have a tremendous job. We have the opportunity to meet with individuals, neighbours and organizations that make up the fabric of our communities, on a daily basis.

Speaker, often we don't have a chance to really know all of the work and dedication that goes on behind the scenes, but it's everyone behind the scenes who makes our province great. Growing up, I didn't think about who was a volunteer, but like many of us, I grew up surrounded and supported by the folks who ran the skating club; my Brownie and Girl Guide leaders; the parents and teachers who made costumes and made the school play happen; the police who taught me bike safety; my softball coach, and the list goes on. I didn't know they were volunteers. I just knew that they were special people in my life, people that I loved and I learned from. It wasn't until I grew up that I realized that all of the special people of impact who were a part of my childhood and my life story were actually called volunteers.

To the coaches, the mentors, the program leaders, the board members, the tour guides, the seniors, the drivers, our church families, the social workers, the animal defenders, the hockey parents and everyone else who supports our communities: Thank you. To all the volunteers who are a part of someone's story, who help, who give, who share and who care: Thank you. We need you; we appreciate you. Our province is better because of you.

On behalf of Andrea Horwath and Ontario's New Democrats, thank you, thank you, thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

PETITIONS

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Norm Miller: I have some 505 petitions, collected by June Tebby of Huntsville, to maintain hospital services in Bracebridge and Huntsville. They read:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare has been considering the future of the Huntsville District Memorial and South Muskoka Memorial hospitals since 2012; and

"Whereas accessible health care services are of critical importance to all Ontarians, including those living in rural areas; and

"Whereas patients currently travel significant distances to access acute in-patient care, emergency, diagnostic and surgical services available at these hospitals; and

"Whereas the funding for small and medium-sized hospitals has not kept up with increasing costs including hydro rates and collective bargaining agreements made by the province; and

"Whereas the residents of Muskoka and surrounding areas feel that MAHC has not been listening to them; and

"Whereas the board of MAHC has yet to take the single-site proposal from 2015 off its books;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario requests that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care" commits to maintaining "core hospital services ... at both Huntsville District Memorial Hospital and South Muskoka Memorial Hospital and ensures all small and medium-sized hospitals receive enough funding to maintain core services."

I sign this, Mr. Speaker, and I give it to Rowan to take in.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

M^{me} France G  linas: I would like to thank a whole bunch of physician students for these petitions.

"Whereas 25 residency spots were cut in Ontario in 2015;

"Whereas 68 medical graduates went unmatched in 2017, 35 of them from Ontario;

"Whereas the AFMC predicts that 141 graduates will go unmatched in 2021, adding to the backlog;

"Whereas an estimated \$200,000 of provincial taxpayer dollars are spent to train each graduate;

"Whereas the ratio of medical students to residency positions had declined to 1 to 1.026 in 2017 from 1 to 1.1 in 2012;

"Whereas wait times for specialists in Ontario continue to grow while many Ontario citizens are still without access to primary care providers;"

They "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) Stop any further cuts to residency positions until a long-term solution is well under way;

"(2) Reinstate the 25 residency positions cut in 2015 to bring Ontario back to its previous steady state;

"(3) Create extra Ontario-only residency spots that can be used when there is an unexpected excess of unmatched Ontario grads to guarantee a spot for every graduate every year;

"(4) Pass Bill 18 as part of the solution to develop actionable long-term recommendations; and

"(5) Improve communications between the MAESD and the MOHLTC so that medical school admissions correspond with residency spots and Ontario's health needs."

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Mia to bring it to the Clerk.

VOTING AGE

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Election Act to lower the voter age.

"Whereas pursuant to S. 15(1)(a) of the Election Act, every person is entitled to vote who, on the general polling day, has attained 18 years of age; and

"Whereas youth in Ontario want to be politically engaged; and

"Whereas younger person(s) have a vested interest in the selection of their political representatives; and

"Whereas young person(s) should not have to pay taxes without representation; and

"Whereas jurisdictions including (and not limiting) Austria and Brazil have extended the eligible voter age (1); and

"Whereas electoral polls indicate a higher rate of electoral turnout in these jurisdictions (2); and

"Whereas young person(s) have the knowledge and maturity to participate in the electoral process;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario lower the eligible voter age to 16 years old, pursuant to amendments made to S. 15(1)(a) Election Act."

I'm going to give this to page Faraaz just as soon as I sign my name.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Robert Bailey: This petition is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas on July 7, 2017, the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change (MOECC) deemed the renewable energy approval (REA) application of Otter Creek Wind Farm LP complete; and

"Whereas Otter Creek's REA stands at the technical review stage; and

"Whereas we believe that environmental studies to date have been insufficient with regard to species at risk; and

"Whereas we believe that studies to date have been insufficient regarding the adverse effects of wind turbines at Otter Creek to migratory birds and waterfowl; and

"Whereas the construction methods required for the Otter Creek site are similar to those being employed in the construction of North Kent Wind 1, where 14 water wells have now been contaminated due to vibration; and

"Whereas Ontario has already postponed the proposed LRP II (large renewable energy projects) because further production of electricity is not required;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to take immediate action to stop any construction or construction planning for the Otter Creek Wind Farm until the above-mentioned environmental concerns, and particularly the issue of water quality safety, are re-examined by expert consultants mutually agreeable to MOECC, the municipal council of Chatham-Kent, and the residents affected by the proposed wind farm development."

I agree with this, will affix my signature and send it down with Eric.

PHARMACARE

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I have a petition here called "Universal Pharmacare for All Ontarians.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas prescription medications are a part of health care, and people shouldn't have to empty their wallets or rack up credit card bills to get the medicines they need;

"Whereas over 2.2 million Ontarians don't have any prescription drug coverage and one in four Ontarians don't take their medications as prescribed because they cannot afford the cost;

"Whereas taking medications as prescribed can save lives and help people live better; and

"Whereas Canada urgently needs universal and comprehensive national pharmacare;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support a universal provincial pharmacare plan for all Ontarians."

I wholeheartedly support this, affix my name and will send it with page Joseph.

RESPIRE CARE

Mr. Han Dong: I have a petition from the Flexible Options Network to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas we are concerned about the elimination of respite care from the core suite of services in the EarlyON Child and Family Centres, and the undue hardship this will cause for families who rely on this service;

"Whereas too many Ontarians who have children do not have access to part-time/flexible/short-term or respite care in their communities; and

"Whereas the Ontario government is rolling out the Renewed Early Years and Child Care Policy Framework so that 'families can have access to programs better suited to their needs';

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"Whereas families in Ontario said that 'they wanted more; more responsive hours of care that meet the demands of modern life';

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to sustain and fund respite/flexible child care under the banner of EarlyON Child and Family Centres as a viable option for families and their children."

I support this petition. I will sign my name to it and give it to page Ryan-Michael.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario drivers aged 80 and over must complete group education sessions, driver record reviews, vision tests and non-computerized in-class assessment in order to renew their licences; and

"Whereas in Cornwall and Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry classes have been cancelled without notice due to staff shortages; and

"Whereas seniors are forced to drive needlessly and wait at offices for temporary licences, which is neither productive nor fair to clients; and

"Whereas seniors in Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry who require a functional assessment must drive to Ottawa or Smiths Falls and complete driving tests in a stressful and unfamiliar environment; and

"Whereas it is the government's duty to serve Ontario residents locally and conveniently;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) To deliver group education sessions and assessments on a walk-in basis at an existing facility such as the Cornwall DriveTest Centre; and

"(2) To take immediate steps to bring local delivery of functional assessment services to Cornwall and the united counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry."

I agree with it and pass it off to page Sophie.

CELIAC DISEASE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Melissa Secord from the Canadian Celiac Association for this petition.

"Whereas the IgA TTG blood screening is the internationally recognized standard as the first step in diagnosing a person with celiac disease;

"Whereas celiac disease is an autoimmune disease that can strike people with a genetic predisposition at any time of life and presents with a large variety of non-specific signs and symptoms;

"Whereas many individuals, such as family members of diagnosed celiacs, are at higher risk and pre-symptomatic screening is advised;

"Whereas covering the cost of the simple test would dramatically reduce wait times to diagnosis, save millions to the health care system due to misdiagnoses, unnecessary tests and serious complications from untreated celiac disease and reduce the painful suffering and health decline of thousands of individuals;

"Whereas Ontario is the only province in Canada not to cover this blood test;"

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario "to cover the cost of the diagnostic blood test (IgA TTG) for celiac disease for those who show symptoms, are a first-degree relative or have an associated condition."

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Hannah to bring it to the Clerk.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly to update Ontario fluoridation legislation.

"Whereas community water fluoridation is a safe, effective and scientifically proven means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

"Whereas recent experience in such Canadian cities as Dorval, Calgary and Windsor that have removed fluoride from drinking water has shown a dramatic increase in dental decay; and

"Whereas the continued use of fluoride in community drinking water is at risk in Ontario cities representing more than 10% of Ontario's population, including the region of Peel; and

"Whereas the Ontario Legislature has twice voted unanimously in favour of the benefits of community water fluoridation, and the Ontario Ministries of Health and Long-Term Care and Municipal Affairs and Housing urge support for amending the Health Protection and Promotion Act and other applicable legislation to ensure community water fluoridation is mandatory and to remove provisions allowing Ontario municipalities to cease drinking water fluoridation, or fail to start drinking water fluoridation, from the Ontario Municipal Act;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Premier of Ontario direct the Ministries of Municipal Affairs and Housing and Health and Long-Term Care to introduce legislation amending the Health Protection and Promotion Act and make changes to other applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario."

I support this and I will be giving it to page Eric.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I have a very important petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas on July 7, 2017, the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change (MOECC) deemed the renewable energy approval (REA) application of Otter Creek Wind Farm LP complete; and

"Whereas Otter Creek's REA stands at the technical review stage; and

"Whereas we believe that environmental studies to date have been insufficient with regard to species at risk; and

"Whereas we believe that studies to date have been insufficient regarding the adverse effects of wind turbines at Otter Creek to migratory birds and waterfowl; and

"Whereas the construction methods required for the Otter Creek site are similar to those being employed in the construction of North Kent Wind 1, where 14 water wells"—now 20—"have now been contaminated due to vibration; and

"Whereas Ontario has already postponed the proposed LRP II (large renewable energy projects) because further production of electricity is not required;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to take immediate action to stop any construction or construction planning for the Otter Creek Wind Farm until the above-mentioned environmental concerns, and particularly the issue of water quality safety, are re-examined by expert consultants

mutually agreeable to MOECC, the municipal council of Chatham-Kent, and the residents affected by the proposed wind farm development.”

I support this petition and send it down with the page.

LYME DISEASE

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I have a petition called “A Lyme Disease Strategy for Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario does not have a strategy on Lyme disease; and

“Whereas the Public Health Agency of Canada is developing an Action Plan on Lyme Disease; and

“Whereas Toronto Public Health says that transmission of the disease requires the tick to be attached for 24 hours, so early intervention and diagnosis is of primary importance; and

“Whereas a motion was introduced to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario encouraging the government to adopt a strategy on Lyme disease, while taking into account the impact the disease has upon individuals and families in Ontario;

“We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to develop an integrated strategy on Lyme disease consistent with the action plan of the Public Health Agency of Canada, taking into account available treatments, accessibility issues and the efficacy of the currently available diagnostic mechanisms. In so doing, it should consult with representatives of the health care community and patients’ groups within one year.”

I wholeheartedly support this, affix my name and will send it to the table with Colin.

VISITORS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I see the member for Perth–Wellington may have a point of order.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Thank you, Speaker. I’d like to introduce members of the Cedarvale Christian School from Harriston in my riding of Perth–Wellington. They just sat down.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Not technically a point of order, but we welcome you to the Ontario Legislature.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PLAN FOR CARE AND OPPORTUNITY ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2018

LOI DE 2018 POUR UN PLAN AXÉ SUR LE MIEUX-ÊTRE ET L’AVENIR (MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 18, 2018, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 31, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various statutes / Projet de loi 31, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter et à modifier diverses lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to the order of the House dated April 23, 2018, I am now required to put the question.

Mr. Sousa has moved second reading of Bill 31, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various statutes. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour of the motion will please say “aye.”

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

I wish to inform the House that I have received a vote deferral request addressed to the Speaker of the Legislature: “Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I request that the vote on second reading of Bill 31 be deferred until deferred votes on Tuesday, April 24.” It’s signed by the chief government whip.

Second reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Orders of the day.

1400

2018 ONTARIO BUDGET

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 18, 2018, on the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: The motion is that the House approve budgetary measures. We don’t, and I don’t know how anybody actually could, because when you look at this budget, Speaker, there are a number of things that stand out, in my view. There are three in particular that I want to speak about.

First is that the budget is full of promises that will never be realized. They’re promises that won’t be realized even if the government were to be re-elected, which they won’t be. The second is that it continues the never-ending process of adding debt to the people of Ontario, adding debt to our children not yet born. Then, the third element that I think needs to be addressed and talked about is how this government, with the budget, is twisting and distorting and using words to camouflage their actions in an attempt to cleanse away some of the unseemly actions we’ve seen of this government with their scandals and with their actions.

One thing that we could be certain of, in stating the financial record of this government: If it were to continue, one thing that would be certain is that our children, in the future, would be living in darkness, living in the cold and eating cat food because there would be no money left over for anything other than the mountains

and mountains of debt that this government has created and wishes to continue to create.

Let me speak about some of the promises first in this budget. Let's take a look at the universal daycare that they've advocated for—and this is not a new promise, Speaker. This promise of universal daycare has been pulled out of the wish list by many Liberal governments in the past.

Actually, the very first time I heard of a Liberal promise for universal daycare was when my youngest son was just born. That was 1993; he's now 25. That promise was made by the federal Liberal government. My son doesn't need daycare anymore at age 25. It was also promised once again by the provincial Liberals in 2003. And now, in 2018, they are promising universal daycare once again on the eve of a general election, but look at the details, Speaker.

The details are important. We have 800,000 children under the age of four in this province. The budget promises 10,000 new daycare spaces starting in 2020—not starting this year; in 2020. That's 10,000 out of a group that is over 800,000. You look in the city of Toronto alone, and there is a wait list of over 20,000 children whose parents are looking for assistance and help to pay for daycare.

Speaker, it is a sham, a sham of a promise in this budget by this government. What is so egregious is not that it's a rehashed promise that will be broken again; what's so egregious is that affordable daycare is a very profound and important public policy discussion that we ought to be having. There are many, many families who are finding the burden and the cost of daycare exceptionally difficult—so difficult, in many cases, that it is not worthwhile for at least one of the parents to work. It is prohibitive, the cost of daycare, and preventing people from working. It should not be used as an election ploy. That's a terrible, terrible undertaking, to purposefully advance a policy and a budget which they know cannot be done and will not do anything for the very people that they are talking to.

The same thing applies with long-term care. Here we have a crisis in long-term care. We have wait-lists that are in the multiple of years. Many people on the wait-lists will never get into a long-term-care facility. They will perish and die before they get to the end of the Liberal wait-list for long-term care.

But in this budget, this government says that they're going to create 5,000 new long-term-care beds, but they're not going to start until 2022. We have a crisis in long-term care now. We've had it for a number of years. But once again, on the eve of a general election, they've had an epiphany, and 5,000 long-term-care beds will not make a dent in that wait-list.

But there was also that other puzzling—when I listened to the throne speech—they are now also going to ration and segregate long-term-care beds based on cultural preferences. When I heard that, I had no—what did that mean? We know that one of the greatest problems in long-term care is the rigidity of the system, and

now they're saying that they will actually segregate a number of beds in each facility for culturally preferred people? I find this astonishing, that we are going to ration out our health care even more with this budget.

It's the same with the promise of a guaranteed increase in daily care for people in long-term care. It does not take effect in this budget until 2022. They are promising things beyond the mandate that they would have, should they be elected—which they won't be. But that is an outlandish action, in my view, when people promise things that go beyond their mandate to be here.

There are words to describe that, when it's purposeful like that, but those words would be unparliamentary to use during a debate. But when somebody knows that they cannot accomplish the promise that they're extending, it is outlandish; it is cavalier; it is brazen in their approach to the people of Ontario.

Also, what about the debt—the continuing, relentless accumulation of debt? In this budget, there's another \$7 billion of debt. They've nearly tripled the debt of this province in their tenure.

1410

Speaker, we all get it: If you are going into debt to purchase something that is a necessity, something that is beneficial, something that will improve your standard of living, something that you require to get back and forth to work, like a vehicle, or a house to keep you warm, then going into debt is not, in and of itself, a bad thing to do. But if you're going into debt because you want to go out to the restaurant every night and drink and party, that is a recipe for ruin. That is what this government has embarked on for the last 15 years: a party on the taxpayers' dollar.

Continuous debt, not to build more roads, not to build more schools, not to build more hospitals—indeed, they've closed 600 rural schools. They have not invested. They have accumulated debt so that they can party and pay for their friends and their insiders, so that they can have a better life at the expense of all people in this province.

The Auditor General has come out and condemned the actions of this government—and not just the Auditor General. The Financial Accountability Officer, all our independent officers, and others who have looked at what this government is doing have all condemned these actions. The Auditor General used the term “bogus” accounting. I guess that's a parliamentary word. There are many other words that are synonyms for “bogus” which would not be allowed to be used in this House.

It's astonishing that this government thinks they can hoodwink and distort and twist words. We saw the Minister of Energy relentlessly, over the last number of weeks, suggesting that the accounting was all approved by Deloitte and EY and KPMG. But the Auditor General, very clearly, both in public accounts and with her public document, has stated that Ernst and Young has not given any approval on that fair hydro scheme, and neither has Deloitte and neither has KPMG.

KPMG informed the Auditor General that they have not provided an opinion on the accounting of the fair

hydro program. Deloitte and Ernst and Young have provided no opinion on approving the accounting for their fair hydro plan.

I believe it is incumbent on people to speak factually in this House and, when they make an error, to stand and correct those errors. We have not seen that happen yet. We have a very, very different view of this government's accounting practices by the Auditor General than by the Minister of Energy.

Part of that, Speaker, we will find out on Wednesday. On Wednesday, the Auditor General will be making another announcement on the state of Ontario's finances. We will not prejudge that outcome, but already, in advance of that, she has identified billions and billions of dollars of our debt that this government has hidden from view with their bogus accounting practices. I think that anybody, in a reasonable, objective manner, will see that Wednesday's announcement will be further condemnations of this government's practices of how they purposely distort and skew and stretch what words mean into a place where they are no longer intelligible whatsoever.

Speaker, that leads us to where we have a huge problem at the present time with the level of debt that we have, where over \$12 billion a year of taxpayers' money is being used to service the debt, to pay the debt. That's \$12 billion that cannot be used for needed services. It's \$12 billion taken out of people's pockets and paid to lenders that cannot be used for anything else.

We have seen what happens when we divert much-needed money out of services. This spring, we had numerous examples of people, residents of Ontario, who were vacationing overseas or out of country and fell ill or were stricken with a disease and needed to get back to Ontario so they could receive health care. With many of those examples that we heard about this spring—a number of them, Speaker—those people could not find a bed to come back to, and a number of them perished waiting to get a hospital bed freed up in this province.

That is what happens when a government spends, spends, spends on needless favours for their insiders such as green energy, the smart meter program and the fair hydro program. All of that money is like a party slush fund for those fellows over there with such a cavalier and brazen disregard for how much it hurts the people of Ontario.

Speaker, it is true: You continue on that path and—we're seeing it now. You know, I said at the beginning that the future does look very dark for many people. The future looks like they will be living in darkness and living in cold and eating cat food, the way this government continues. We're already seeing it. Sixty thousand people in Ontario couldn't afford their electricity bills under this government and were disconnected—60,000. That's a number that would be outrageous in a Third World country, and it's happening here in this province by the hand and the actions of this Minister of Energy, by the hand and the actions of the Premier and the total cabinet and the backbench who acquiesce and accept and

go along with this brutal, brutal treatment of the people of Ontario: 60,000 people cut off.

I see that the minister thinks that's good. That's an improvement for the environment, he says, because they're not using up fossil fuels and they're not using gas-fired generating stations. He chuckles over there when I state about how 60,000 families can't have the lights on or the heat on. The Minister of the Environment still chuckles and still laughs at the brutal treatment that many people in this province are experiencing.

We've heard the term of choosing between "heating and eating." For those people, they have made the decision; they've cut the power off. Maybe they can get some crumbs to eat.

Speaker, on this side of the House, we do not support the budgetary measures of this government for many, many reasons, some of them that I've just explained: promises that will never be executed or realized, debt that will never end, and the twisting and the distorting of words to try to cleanse the actions of this government, which can only be viewed, Speaker, as a corrupt and contemptible government.

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Interjection: Speaker, come on.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): You've got to withdraw.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Miss Monique Taylor: It is always colourful to be listening to the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington and his comments, but it is always an honour for me to stand in this House and to have the privilege of speaking on behalf of the people of Hamilton Mountain.

Today we are speaking about A Plan for Care and Opportunity. What a wonderful title. Unfortunately, that is the title of the budget that this Liberal government has brought forward. We all know, Speaker, that we've had this government in power for the last 15 years. We see a health care that is in crisis. We have schools that are crumbling. We have 32,000 seniors on wait-lists for long-term care. We have 12,000 children on wait-lists for mental health. We have seen abuse, literally, to families with autism. We have seen scandal after scandal. We have seen people who have worked for this Liberal government been put in jail. We have seen so many miscomings for the people of this province.

By knocking on doors, I can tell you that this government is done. Its days are done, especially in my riding. But there is hope on the way: Andrea Horwath and New Democrats have put together a plan that makes sense for people. We see Doug Ford literally taking us back to "the future is dark," as per the member's words. That is not the change that people are looking for, and I know that they are looking for that hope.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Chris Ballard: I am delighted to be able to stand up and follow and make comments on the presenta-

tion that the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington made a few minutes ago. I can always say—perhaps the most generous phrase I can use would be “colourful.”

I wanted to take my short time, Speaker. I don't have enough time in two minutes to correct his record. I think that the voters in June will make, quite frankly, the right decision at that time. But I do want to talk about some of the key things in this budget that really speak to the residents of my riding. Key among them is the continued increase in funding for our hospital care sector. We have a hospital in Newmarket that is a fantastic place. It's called Southlake Regional Health Centre. I was delighted to be able to talk to them about an increase to their base funding of some \$14.4 million over the past year and—just this past budget—part of that was \$8.2 million to their base funding.

But what is really exciting is the 12 adult mental health beds that we'll be adding to that hospital, because that's a key concern, not only in my riding but right across Ontario, with the \$822 million to support Ontario's publicly funded hospitals. That's a 4.6 average, I'm told.

So, Speaker, enough of the diuretic bombast from members opposite. We will continue to press on and do the right thing for the speakers and for the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I am very pleased to rise and give a few comments after our member from the PC caucus from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington. Basically, he was talking—with sort of a happier tone, maybe—about how, hopefully, we're going to be able to make some changes in the coming years for Ontario and not keep going further and further into debt.

I think we're not the only party that is hearing at the doors that people are getting a little bit afraid, when they realize that the province has been downgraded yet again and that we are spending over a billion dollars a month in interest. That money could be going to all sorts of social programs and health care and all the things that people need and want. When we're downgraded, people do understand, especially in my riding of Thornhill, that that means we're paying a higher interest rate, so that means even more money is going into covering the debt, and it means even less money is available for programs and things like that.

Yes, we see, with the Liberal government's budget plan, that there are promises that won't be realized. The member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington called them election ploys. I think that people have been promised some things so many times that they're finally waking up to the fact that—what do they say?—one time a fool, shame on me; twice fooled, shame on you. They've been promised so many times, in my riding, the Yonge subway expansion and other things, and certainly, in the city of Vaughan, for the MacKenzie Health hospital, a separate campus in a separate location.

People are starting to realize that they make the promises and then they get elected, and there is a lot of talk and a lot of rehashing of old promises, and yet nothing materializes. So people are tired, and I think they are definitely ready for change.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It was interesting, listening to the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington. I would say that bits and pieces of what he said, I agree with; the rest of it, I took it with a grain of salt.

But certainly, when he started to talk about the situations we have with long-term care, where 32,000 people—and since the number was published, I think we're probably closer to 34,000 people—are waiting for a bed in a long-term-care home. We have 78,000 beds. If you think that there is a lineup of 34,000 people for 78,000 beds, we have a problem.

When we hear the Liberals, it's as if they just realized that we have this problem. No. We knew that the baby boomers were going to be 80 years old the day they were born. We saw this coming. We knew that as people age—some of us get frailer as we age—we may need the services that long-term care provides.

So now, in this budget, a few weeks before an election, the light suddenly goes on, and they ask people if they are ready to bid for more licences for long-term-care beds. All of this gets done really quickly, so that in my riding, people who had been working on this for some time still were not able to meet the deadline of three weeks that you had between the day the minister made the announcement and the day your full proposal had to be in—

Mr. Jim McDonell: Two weeks.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Yes, two weeks—that was it; that was all—for something that had been going on for so long, just so that they can say, “Oh, we are reviewing proposals.”

This is shameful. Those are people's lives in the balance. Those are our loved ones—our parents, our grandparents, our neighbours—who need help in order to live with respect. They need a place in a long-term-care home. It is not coming any time soon, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. I return to the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington to reply.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thanks to the members from Hamilton Mountain, Nickel Belt and Thornhill, and the Minister of the Environment for their comments.

I'll address the Minister of the Environment. Clearly, we saw that he didn't even try to defend the indefensible actions of this government; he didn't even attempt to. All the points that I talked about—the promises that these people are putting out, knowing that they will not be implemented—are egregious. The people who have their power cut off, the people who are waiting for loved ones to get long-term-care beds—no comment whatsoever.

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Speaker, I will say that in my 11 years, one thing that has become very clear through observation and experience is that this government does not care about people. This government couldn't care less about people. They care about optics, they care about being seen to be interested in a subject, but they have no compassion or care for anyone. They are looking out solely and exclusively for themselves. Their pockets need to be filled, their life needs to be rich, and they don't care one iota about the hard-working people of this province. They couldn't care less about them. If the Minister of the Environment did care, or the Minister of Energy did care, they would lower the costs for electricity, not come up with some convoluted, bogus scheme that adds \$4 billion more to their coffers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: Speaker, I'm going to be doing my hour lead on the motion, so for those of you who think Monday afternoons were tough before I started my hour, it's going to be really tough. It's tough to do an hour on any bill, but I've already done an hour on budget measures and really, at this time, we all know that we're just here for the motions right now. We are 45 or 50 days from an election, so realistically, regardless of how the election comes out, we are all just biding our time.

As a farmer, this is the toughest time of year for me. My friends back home are still dealing with a foot and a half of snow, but it's going away quickly. But this is the time of year you make sure, just like the campaign—we should be in the campaign, because this is the time of year, when you're on a farm, you get stuff ready. You check bearings in the equipment. You grease what has to be greased. You hopefully find the things that are broken before you get to the field.

But there's something about farming that we should learn here: that machinery never breaks when it's in the shed. It always breaks—no matter how much preventive maintenance you do, machinery never breaks when it's in the shed.

Before I go any further, I'm going to have to write down the time, because they warned me that they weren't going to put the—what time is there?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It's 14:31.

Mr. John Vanthof: Perfect. Someone will give me a warning or they'll start throwing things after an hour.

I'm going to get back to the issue about how machinery doesn't break when it's in the shed, because it has some connotations for government, especially a government that has been in power for 15 years. There is intrinsic knowledge that a government has, when it has been in power for 15 years, that the opposition parties wouldn't necessarily have. Right? That's why, when I started farming, I made a lot more mistakes, hopefully, than when I finished, because I'd learned things over the years. I'd learned to predict things and, as a farmer, that causes me even more concern with the budget measures that the government has just proposed.

Let's get back to what is called a “plan for care and opportunity.” It's the latest budget. It is introduced just before an election, and I'm going to focus on a couple of issues that I think are an example of why this is a bit of a cynical document.

I would disagree with the member from Lennox—Frontenac—from Lanark—

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Frontenac.

Mr. John Vanthof: Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington.

I would disagree. The individual members across—I think we all care for the people we represent. I believe that. But I do believe that the longer a government is in, as a whole, the machinery of the party starts to govern for the party instead of for the province, and that's what's happening to this government. I think this last budget, the budget we're speaking to right now, is evidence of that.

The first example is on health care. In this budget, the government promises that they're going to fix the hallway medicine problem that they have created over the last 15 years. They're going to fix it by a huge injection of cash, \$800 million and change—

M^{me} France Gélinas: Eight hundred and twenty-two.

Mr. John Vanthof: —\$822 million. But what I find—this is a term that I have never heard anywhere but the Legislature of Ontario. I have never said “this is passing strange” on the farm. But what I find passing strange is when the Premier said, “Well, you know, one of the reasons is the aging demographic.” You know what? Aging demographics is something you can predict. When you have the full force of the Ministry of Health and all their forecasters, and you have outside think tanks, aging demographics is something you can predict.

The previous Minister of Health at one time said that one of those reasons was the flu season. Well, the flu season—okay, you can't really predict how bad or how—

M^{me} France Gélinas: Yes, you can.

Mr. John Vanthof: You can? Okay. But the flu season, by itself, isn't causing the problem. The Premier admitted that when she said, “One of the reasons is aging demographics.” Well, you know what? If the true reason is aging demographics, then the government of the day decided to shortchange hospitals and decided to put people in—

M^{me} France Gélinas: Hallways and bathrooms.

Mr. John Vanthof: —in hallways, in shower rooms. They made that decision because they knew that was coming. They made that decision.

Then, to top it all off, they acknowledged it by saying, “We're going to put in close to a billion dollars and we're going to solve that problem.” It's a problem that they knew was going to happen.

When you have a government that has been in for 15 years, you also have also to take responsibility for some of the things that are happening. It's fine to take credit: “Oh, we're going to fix things now. Just give us one more shot, just one more shot,” they say, “and we will fix things, because we know what the problems are.” Well, they've known what the problems have been for quite a while.

It's the same with long-term care. Once again, they've discovered the crisis in long-term care. Some people wait for years and years for long-term care; some people never get there. Again, there are all kinds of stats, all kinds of research, showing where these people are, what time of life they are at, what their life expectancy is. All that stuff exists. This didn't fall out of the sky. This government has been in power 15 years, and then, "Oh, we're going to solve it now. We have had our moment. We're going to solve it."

Well, I think I would agree with many of the people I talk to in my riding who are saying, "Well, you know what, John? If they were really planning on solving it, they would have done it already." They would have done it already, and they didn't. Because they have the stats—it's one thing if we have a natural disaster; you might not have all those. That's something you can't necessarily predict. But in health care, with an aging population, you know you can predict with a fair amount of certainty where your trouble spots are going to be.

People have been telling you. The people from the hospital association and the CEOs from my local hospitals have been telling me for a while, and I'm sure that they've been telling the government as well. I'm positive, because these are good people and they're doing their job. The government has basically been saying, "Okay, we hear you; we hear you." And now, a month or two before an election, "Oh, we are going to fix it; just give us one more chance. Oh, and by the way, you can trust us."

I can't speak for the rest of the province, but certainly the people I talk to—I talk to a lot of people, as we all do. Any member in this House, regardless of party affiliation, is out there talking to people. That's our job. That's the art of politics, to know what's going on. It must be hard for some of the people across, because they know what's going on, too, and they have to explain it.

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Hon. Marie-France Lalonde: They're loving it.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'm getting heckled that some of the people are loving it, and that is their choice. But I think the majority of the people in this province, come June 8, aren't going to be loving it.

I need to come back to this. My next one is going to be on Hydro One. Specifically on health care, on hospital budgets, this has been so predictable. That's what makes it so—I'm going to use a word I've never used on the farm—egregious. We don't use the word "egregious" down on the farm much—

M^{me} France Gélinas: But you should.

Mr. John Vanthof: But we should. We should. I've already forgotten about the one that the Minister of the Environment said. I don't use that one down on the farm much either. Anyway, it was talking about something that happens on the farm, but it was much better language.

Hon. Chris Ballard: I'll share it with you later.

Mr. John Vanthof: Okay. That one just wouldn't fly in Timiskaming—Cochrane.

I guess a word that we would use—and that's what people are finding—is "insulting." It's insulting. "We've got all the answers now. We're going to put a billion here, a billion there, a billion there." Well, you knew that four years ago. You knew that. So you knew, and the government decided to leave people in hallways, perhaps because they were waiting for this budget so they could come out like a white knight to solve their own problem. But in the meantime, they knew. On some of this stuff—the long-term-care stuff, people in hospital hallways—they knew, because the stats exist. The stats exist.

On the second case where this budget has some issues—I'm going to regroup for a second. Where this budget has some issues is—

M^{me} France Gélinas: Hydro One.

Mr. John Vanthof: —Hydro One, and why Hydro One has an issue—it has got several—and how it ties into the budget.

It hasn't been very long since the Minister of Finance said several times that they "slayed" the deficit. Not only that, last year at about this time, they were predicting three or four years of a "slayed" deficit.

M^{me} France Gélinas: A balanced budget.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, a balanced budget. Balanced budgets are not necessarily—if you can achieve it, that's great. But what is so insulting once again is that that was a totally empty promise, because now they're promising a huge deficit. They're wondering why bond-rating agencies—I don't know if that's what they are; Moody's is an investment rating agency—Moody's and others, are starting to get a bit cranky.

I again go back to my farm and people's businesses. I had a big mortgage. My bank manager didn't get cranky if I said, "This is going to happen, this is going to happen and I might have a problem here. You know what? I might have to borrow some money here." But my bank manager would get cranky if I would say, "You know what? Everything's fine. We're making money this year. You aren't going to have any problems," and then six months later, "Oh, yeah, I forgot to tell you that I needed a new roof, and I forgot to tell you that I needed a new this," which this government is doing, because they artificially balanced their budget—again, for their own purposes.

They promised they were going to balance the budget, and they artificially balanced it. One of those ways was by short changing hospitals. This problem has existed; they knew it existed. That's one of the ways. Another way they did it was by selling hard assets that actually make the province money, like Hydro One.

This isn't a new issue. There have been some interesting editorials regarding Hydro One, and one in the Toronto Sun. The NDP doesn't often quote the Toronto Sun. I can fairly say that in my seven years here, I have never quoted the Toronto Sun. But I am going to quote the Toronto Sun today because, like I've said in this House before, even a broken clock is right twice a day, so sometimes I will agree with the Toronto Sun. The Toronto Sun, in their editorial on April 21:

"Former Ontario NDP leader Howard Hampton's pre-occupation with hydro issues when he ran for the Premier's job in 2003 was called an 'obsession' by the grey, old Globe and Mail.

"We may have poked fun at him as well.

"But it turns out Hampton was an early prophet of coming electromagnetic calamity, whose political concerns about hydro privatization and rising rates were prophetic." Who would have guessed?

M^{me} France Gélinas: He did.

Mr. John Vanthof: He guessed, and do you know what? His NDP colleagues, our NDP colleagues, were beating the drum and nobody was listening.

But what's happening with Hydro One now, and why the people of Ontario feel insulted by this government and why the people of Ontario are going to vote this government out in massive numbers, is because none of them, when they voted for this so-called breath of fresh air, Kathleen Wynne, who was going to be different—the first thing she did was to sell controlling interest of Hydro One, out of the blue.

They were going to consult. Do you remember at the start, when the Premier first got elected? There were consultations on more things than we even knew existed. But they just decided at the stroke of a pen to give up control of Hydro One, or basically to sell Hydro One, and—the governing party may disagree—in large part to bring in some short-term cash to balance the budget.

M^{me} France Gélinas: For \$9 billion. That's all we got.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes. I'm going to go back to the farm again: It's like selling the cows to pay the feed bill. As a long-term strategy, it doesn't work, but that's what they did. They sold controlling interest of Hydro One, something—I'm going to get to that later in my time—that we're going to reverse.

But they didn't actually touch the real issue that people in Ontario were facing, and that was the actual cost of hydro. Privatizing Hydro One didn't solve any cost concerns. Likely, in the long term, unless we turn this ship around, it's going to make the cost concerns much higher.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Every officer tells us that.

Mr. John Vanthof: That's right. The Auditor General, the Financial Accountability Officer—they all tell us that.

What the government has decided to do—again, since the last budget—is the fair hydro plan. They call it the fair hydro plan. We have some problems with the fair hydro plan and the budgetary officers are having some serious problems with the fair hydro plan because, really, it's not fair to anyone. It's a plan developed, again, to try to get the governing party past the next election with the least damage possible, and again, it's a plan for the governing party, not for the people of Ontario.

Now, are the people of Ontario who qualify for this plan getting temporary relief? Yes. The key word is—

Hon. Chris Ballard: "Relief."

Mr. John Vanthof: Is "temporary." I totally disagree with the Minister of the Environment—

Hon. Chris Ballard: And climate change.

Mr. John Vanthof: And climate change; I don't want to shortchange you on climate change. But it's temporary. It would be the same as if we voted for a program that was going to do temporary relief on climate change. It wouldn't be an effective program.

Temporary rate relief helps people for a little while, but the problem is that not only is it only temporary, but, because of the way the program is set up, it's going to cost people a lot more in the future. You're borrowing money to temporarily reduce rates, and that money is just going on the tab and it's going to come back. It's a little wave of rate relief going out, but when the rate tsunami comes back, it's going to wash right back over the ratepayers, and they won't know how to deal with the bills because they'll be so large.

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But that won't bother the present folks sitting here because they will be past the next election. I'm not saying it won't bother you as individuals. But the party structure—you know what? They're only worried about the next election. They're not worried about the long-term structure.

Where it gets even more interesting, with this borrowing of the money—because that's fairly easy to understand. The government borrows the money to defer the rates, but then, somewhere along the line, they are trying to change the structure so that it actually doesn't show up on their books. They're changing the structure. The Auditor General, to her credit, is waving the alarm bells. The government is doing what they can to disagree and discredit the Auditor General, but, quite frankly, the Auditor General is waving the alarm bells. Why? Why is she waving alarm bells? Because it's her job to audit the consolidated books. The only way you can audit the consolidated books—and this is, again, from the farmer perspective; it might not be totally 100% from the accounting perspective—is that everyone who is in that consolidation has to present the books the same way, and in that way you can paint an accurate picture.

But, when you have, out of the blue, the IESO presenting their books in a different way, because it looks better for the fair hydro plan and looks better for the government, it makes it very hard to consolidate the books so they're actually accurate. That's a huge problem.

The government turns back and says, "Oh, no, no, no. Wait a second. We disagree with the Auditor General. We have some of the best independent auditors. We've got the big three or the big four. You guys should feel comforted." Well, you know what? It's not the job of the big three or the big four or the KPMGs of the world—who I have lots of respect for, and the other ones—to sign off on the government's books. In fact, the big auditing firms—it's their job, actually, to design programs so that big companies pay the least tax possible. I don't know if it is their specific job, but they come up with tax schemes to make sure that their clients pay the least tax possible, so that they can show their books in the most advantageous way possible for their company.

That is what IESO is doing, because the government told them to do so. But they're not presenting their books in the best way possible so that the people of Ontario can actually understand what is going on.

When I was at the public accounts committee, we had the people from IESO there. Public accounts can get pretty heated. I specifically asked, several times, "So the books from IESO are market-regulated?" and they disagreed with that. I specifically asked several times if the IESO could present the books in the way that the Auditor General wanted to. After several pointed questions, the answer was, yes, they can, but they don't want to, or the government doesn't want them to. That's the issue.

If the only issue is that you present the books one way or the other—there's no hidden money here. It is not a scandal per se. It's just that the Auditor General wants the books presented in a way that's easy to consolidate, so people can understand. The IESO doesn't want to do it, the government doesn't want to do it, because then they'll have to admit there's a lot more debt there than with regulated accounting.

Four years ago, the Premier was going to be open and transparent. We heard it again in the federal election: "sunny ways." Well, this was the provincial version of "sunny ways." And yet, here we have the Auditor General of the province saying, "Excuse me, but on something as simple"—and anyone who has ever done a bank statement at home—"as consolidating the books"—it's not that simple when you dealing with the government, because the government is big but the principle is the same. In midstream, the IESO, at the government's direction, says, "No, no, no, we're not going to present them that way. Even though we can, we have decided not to."

Then people start to scratch their heads, because they may not fully understand exactly what's going on, but they go, "Wait a second. The Auditor General is saying this. She is non-partisan. She's a representative to all the people in the Legislature for the province. And the government is saying, 'No, no, no, we've got these private firms inside.'"

It's—I don't know—

Miss Monique Taylor: It stinks.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes. There have been scandals in the past—and this one may not be a scandal yet, but we don't know. There have been huge scandals in the past, which have had the big audit firms sign off on their books and then, lo and behold—"Whoa, whoa; what happened here?"

All that the Auditor General is asking for, in simple terms, is why, when the IESO admitted it was possible, does the IESO and the government refuse to do so? When the Auditor General comes out with her report, I believe, this Wednesday—again, I haven't seen the report. But the government plainly had the chance to tell the IESO, "Do you know what? Let's do the books the way you've done the books, and that way we can make the Auditor General—let her sign off on the books, and the people will have a true picture."

Really, if this government is so open and transparent, they want to be judged on—I heard the Minister of Energy, several times this morning in questioning, say, "It is a policy decision." I agree with that; it is a policy decision. They should want to be judged by their policy decisions, so they should present their books in a way that they have always been presented. Then they could actually be judged on their policy decisions.

The temporary fair hydro plan is, in our opinion, a very bad policy decision. It has a short-term benefit for the ratepayer—very short-term, right? It has a short-term benefit, maybe, for the government. But it has a lot of long-term pain because, if you couldn't pay your hydro bill before the fair hydro plan and when they tack a bunch of interest on it, it's going to get worse. Oh, wait; I forgot about the interest part, because the way they are doing the books, they're actually—I believe it is an extra \$4 billion of interest, right?

Miss Monique Taylor: Unnecessary.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes. Instead of this fancy accounting scheme, if they would just come clean and say, "Yes, here's our policy decision: We are going to offer a rate rebate. The only way that we can pay for that rebate is that we've got to borrow some money. Since the government can borrow money at a better rate than anyone else, we're going to put the money on the government's books and then, guess what? A little while later, you're going to have to pay that money back."

At the end of the day, what would happen, Speaker, is that the Minister of Finance wouldn't be able to get up and say, "Well, we have slain the deficit—or even temporarily slain the deficit."

First, they sell off the controlling interest of Hydro One, and then they borrow a whack of money on the people's behalf at a rate that is much more expensive than they had to. They're claiming credit for that, and they wonder why people are getting tired and cynical about this government. I'm sure there are people on the government side who are shocked that the vast majority of Ontarians aren't embracing this budget with open arms. I'm sure they're shocked. I'm sure they're thinking, "Gee, I thought this was going to work, like it worked last time."

1500

Do you know what? I think there are a lot of people in Ontario saying, "Fool me once—fool me twice, no, no."

Mr. John Yakabuski: What are they talking about?

Mr. John Vanthof: I'm talking about lots of issues, all budget-related, Mr. Yakabuski.

Mr. John Yakabuski: You've lost your train of thought.

Mr. John Vanthof: I've lost my train of thought. Yes. *Interjections.*

Mr. John Vanthof: Oh, yes, I'm coming to the train.

There's one point I want to talk about before I move on—about Hydro One. Perhaps back on the farm we don't understand how the business world works, but I think we do. The sale of Hydro One—and they say, "Oh,

we're going sell 60%, but we're going to keep 40%, so we will be the majority shareholder at 40%."

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: Well, regardless of what the regs say, 40% is not the majority. But they say, "Oh, no, we're the controlling—so nothing is going to happen with Hydro One. They are going to operate, not as a private company, but at the bidding of the government." I distinctly remember the Minister of Finance telling us that—great.

So if the government, as the majority shareholder, and since we all agreed in this House—it was before I got here, but we all agreed, including the Conservatives. I'll give the Conservatives due when the Conservatives need due. They need all the help they can get some days. They agreed, as well, to stop burning coal, because burning coal for power is not good for the environment. So if the government is the controlling interest in Hydro One, why are they investing in coal plants in other jurisdictions? If you burn coal in one jurisdiction and the other jurisdiction—it doesn't make any difference; it's not good for the environment, period.

The issue, again, regarding the executive salaries: The government obviously approves that. But the one thing that I'm really worried about, as the critic for agriculture and rural affairs—the one reason why it's so important for us to regain control of Hydro One is because fixing hydro lines in rural Ontario is not a profit centre for the company. When you're a private company—I don't blame private companies for this; private companies have a huge role. Private companies should look out for the interests of their shareholders. But if Hydro One is only going to look out for the interests of its shareholders, then their main focus is not going to be the dependability of hydro in rural Ontario. I have no faith that the current structure—that the 40% is going to say, "Oh, no, wait a second." These same 40% let them buy coal power plants, so I don't think that this 40% is going to stand there and say, "No, no. We're going to fix hydro lines in rural Ontario first." They're not going to do that. That's why we have to regain control of that company—so that we can make sure that that company is actually doing things for all the people of Ontario, every one of them, and one of those things is so that all the people of Ontario can have dependable access to a necessity of life in our modern lives, which is hydro. By selling the controlling interest, these folks have completely and totally forgotten about that.

I hear the minister once in a while talk about the Ontario Energy Board. Again, they have a role to play, but all the rules in the world are not going to change the focus of a private company. A private company has a different focus than a public company, and there are things that a private company won't do.

I've got another example, something that we've had to fight in northern Ontario: We have something in northern Ontario called the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission—great bunch of folks. It's a public—I guess you can call it a company. It's an arm of the gov-

ernment. I think it was in 2012, the governing Liberals were going to dump it—"divest" was their fancy word.

For Hydro One, they have a different phrase. For selling Hydro One, it's "broadening the ownership." That's another phrase I have never heard down in farm country. You either sell a part of it or you sell the whole thing. I don't go home and say, "We're selling a part of this. But we're not actually selling it; we're broadening the ownership." That doesn't last long in farm country. If the governing party wonders why people are getting sick of them—it's stuff like that; it's "broadening the ownership." No, you sold 60%. It was a public company. It was very broad at the start. You decided to sell 60%. That's a good example of what people are getting sick of. The phrases that they don't really—it's not that they don't understand them, but they're trying to say something by not saying it. It's just like saying—and I've heard the member from Beaches–East York say many times, "Well, actually, in the last campaign, we did talk about selling Hydro One." No, they talked about reviewing the assets. Those are two totally different things. At no time when the candidate had debates did he say, "The first thing we're going to do is sell Hydro One." No, he didn't say that, because they wouldn't have been elected if they had said they were going to sell Hydro One. They were going to "review the assets"—which didn't say anything to anybody and actually sounds reasonable. And then, when they decided to sell it, they were going to "broaden the ownership." Again, they wonder why they're in trouble.

Getting back to the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission: People in northern Ontario, and a lot of people in the rest of Ontario too—I have to give credit where credit is due—mobilized to stop the government from making that huge mistake. But before we got mobilized, they closed the train, which we're going to bring back—and I'm going to get back to that later.

They sold off Ontera, which was the Internet service in much of northern Ontario. How that was going to work: "We're going to sell it to a private company because they have much more expertise in this. In the end, your service is going to get better because private is always more efficient." You know the whole spiel. I believe it cost them \$60 million—and someone can correct me if I'm off by a few million—to get the paperwork done, and they sold it for \$6 million. They had just finished doing a lot of upgrades, putting a big fibre optic cable through, and they gave it away. Do you know what happened then?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: No.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you. The folks who had Ontera service that was provided by the Ontario government, because they live in places it doesn't really pay the private sector to go—that doesn't mean that they don't add to the economy. It's just that in certain areas, just because it doesn't pay the private sector to provide a service—overall, the provision of that service actually adds to the economy greatly. The folks who were on Ontera talked to the folks on Lake Temagami who had

Ontera service and asked them how much better the service has gotten under Bell Aliant. Do you know what? You will get some interesting responses. In places that used to be served by—and it still says “Ontera.” My daughter has a house in a place served by Ontera. She called: “I’d like to get my Internet hooked up.” Ontera: “No, we don’t service that area anymore.” Bell Aliant doesn’t service it either.

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So we know what happens when public services get taken over by private enterprise in places that aren’t profit centres. Northern Ontario, rural Ontario: They are not going to be first on the list when it comes time to repair. When you have a business in rural Ontario or a baby in rural Ontario or animals to ventilate and feed in northern Ontario, you need dependable power. Actually, for any modern type business, you need dependable broadband. That’s why we’re proposing to put \$100 million a year into broadband that people can use in rural Ontario. In a lot of places the private sector won’t supply that. That’s why the private sector is going to fall short in the provision of hydro transmission in rural Ontario. That’s why we have to buy Hydro One back.

The detractors are telling us, “Oh, my gosh, the NDP is going to borrow billions to buy Hydro One back.” We’re not. It’s going to take a while, but we don’t need to own 100% of the company to make the changes we need; we need to own over 50%. We’re going to own 100%. It will take a while. But you don’t need 100% to make sure that the company is doing the right thing; you need to own more than 50%. You don’t need just to be the majority shareholder of 40%; you need to be the controlling shareholder at 50%-plus.

Mr. Arthur Potts: It goes the other way around—

Mr. John Vanthof: No, it doesn’t—

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: No. The majority shareholder at 40%—that’s what you guys say. You have control of the company at 40%. You’re the biggest individual shareholder. We’re saying that if you want to control the company, you need 51%. If you look at it, that won’t take that long to do. That’s where we are on Hydro One.

How much time do I have left to burn here?

Miss Monique Taylor: You have 20 minutes—18.

Mr. John Vanthof: I’ve only got 18 minutes? Wow. I’m actually going to run out of time, Speaker.

Miss Monique Taylor: You only go to 3:30, right?

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes.

Coming from northern Ontario, there are a few other issues I’d like to mention where we’ve had some serious problems with this government. Again, I’m the critic for finance, but also rural affairs. Coming from northern Ontario, this government has made conscious decisions to nickel and dime on winter road maintenance. The way that the last generation of contracts was made, they knew that the contractors weren’t going to be able to meet the standards. They knew, and they went ahead anyway.

In some places, the contractors have given up and walked away, and they had to go back. But again, with a

government that’s been in for 15 years, you can’t say, “Oh, I didn’t know that was going to happen.” There’s a difference between being in for 15 years and 15 months. With most of the problems that are happening under this government, they know very well what the cause is, but they are making calculated decisions that some people aren’t—I would disagree with the member from Lanark, Lennox, Frontenac and Addington. Am I close?

Miss Monique Taylor: Yes, close.

Mr. John Vanthof: I don’t agree with him that the folks on the opposite side don’t care. I don’t agree. But they do make choices on who is safer than others, and who gets service quicker than others. Going back to the Ontario Northland passenger train, they made a conscious decision that the people in northeastern Ontario who use that train to get to medical appointments, the students who use that train—they made a conscious decision that people in the northeast don’t need accessible transportation. They made that conscious decision. It didn’t fall out of the sky; they made it.

I’ve only got a few minutes left, and I actually did get a couple of quotes today.

I spent 40 minutes talking about how the people are not going to vote Liberal. That’s my position. The folks on the other side might not agree, but that’s my position. They’ve got two choices to make. They made that choice. The second choice is, they’re either going to vote for the Conservatives or vote for Andrea Horwath and the NDP.

I heard the member from Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington say in his 20 minutes before my comments that this government—one of their hallmarks is their favours for insiders. I’m just quoting him. But I would like to quote the leader of the Conservative Party—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Which one?

Mr. John Vanthof: The new leader, Doug Ford, at the Queen’s Park briefing in February—this is Doug Ford: “I can assure you, moving forward, every single riding nomination is going to be 100% transparent—no little games, no backroom deals, no favourites to the leader are going to be put in there. It’s going to be the best person wins.” That lasted, folks, until April. That lasted until April.

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: The Conservatives accuse the government about having favours for insiders. They haven’t even made it to government and they’re already doing that—really. That’s because, in some of the cases, there were people working for several years to get nominated and, boom, they just get slapped down. They’re saying, “Trust us. We’re going to clean up everything. Trust us. Just don’t trust us with the candidates.” I guess not all the rot has been rooted.

Mr. Arthur Potts: It didn’t work for the leadership debate.

Mr. John Vanthof: No, but it’s a legitimate question, because these are the words—we’ve established that, in many cases, words from the Liberal government haven’t mattered in the past. I think even the chief government whip would agree with me on occasion.

Mr. James J. Bradley: Oh, no. I agree with you about Doug Ford.

Mr. John Vanthof: But this one is the same. We are faced with—I think everyone wants two things. They want to pay less tax and have more service. That doesn't work. It doesn't work. You have to be prudent. But if you look at a lot of newspaper articles and a lot of the things that Mr. Ford is saying—it will be interesting when their real platform comes out because the People's Guarantee is no longer there—they're going to cut taxes for the rich; they're going to cut taxes for the poor. Well, the poor don't actually pay tax. That's not 100% accurate, what they are doing there.

But again, if you cut every level of tax, you cannot increase service. You cannot maintain service. At the same time they're saying they're going to maintain services and cut taxes. Well, you know what? We've been down that road before. I remember; I was a councillor.

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: Oh, you were a councillor, too, or mayor. I remember the Common Sense Revolution and Premier Harris. He was going to fix the problem, and he downloaded a lot of hard services onto municipalities. One of my municipalities, the town of Iroquois Falls, has the dubious distinction of having the most kilometres of road per person in the province.

1520

Interjection: Shame.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, it is a shame. This government had 15 years to fix that. The problems that these guys caused—they had 15 years to fix it.

Iroquois Falls has a unique issue, because when the roads were downloaded, they had more than 5,000 people. If you will recall, if you had less than 5,000 people, the rules were different. Well, their population, because of the plant closing, has fallen below 5,000 people, so their problem is getting worse and worse and worse. But they know what is going to happen when we get all these promises of everyone pays less tax—

Mr. James J. Bradley: Less service.

Mr. John Vanthof: Less service.

Hopefully, before this election campaign comes to an end, the Conservatives will come clean with who is going to get cut. There's just no way around it.

There was a really good article in the *Globe and Mail* on March 19 by Jim Stanford. He's a professor of economics at McMaster University. It's a really good article about how much they're actually going to have to cut if they're really—again, the Conservatives haven't come out with a platform, so perhaps they're going to have a deficit as well.

We've come out with a platform; we're going to have a deficit. We're not hiding it. We're going to work with everybody. We're showing where the money is going to go.

Remember, I said that the one thing that bankers don't like is when you hide stuff and then you say, "We're going to be zero, but the next year, all of a sudden, it's going to be \$6 billion." That's what bankers don't like. That's what the people don't like either.

Maybe, Speaker, they're hoping to get by on a hop, skip and a jump and a promise here and there, but at the end of the day, they should come out with exactly who is going to get cut.

In our platform, we're saying what we believe. We believe that people should have universal pharmacare. We believe that people should have dental care. Some of the most heartbreaking issues in my constituency office and, I'm sure, in constituency offices across the province, are people who come in and they can't afford to go to the dentist, and their lives are torture because of it. That should not happen.

At a speech to the Economic Club of Canada, the Premier said that corporate profits in this province are soaring, and I have people coming into my office who can't eat because they can't afford to go to the dentist. That is after 15 years of this compassionate, open, transparent and caring government—really.

People are getting so disenchanted with the wolves in sheep's clothing that they're actually thinking about voting for the wolf.

People actually have a choice. In this election, they have a choice. They can vote for Andrea Horwath and the NDP.

How much time do I have left?

Miss Monique Taylor: Six and a half minutes.

Mr. John Vanthof: Six and a half minutes? Cool. I can start on something else.

Hon. Chris Ballard: Climate change.

Mr. John Vanthof: Just give me a second.

Mr. James J. Bradley: Talk about all the good things the government is doing.

Mr. John Vanthof: That is going to be 30 seconds.

Mr. James J. Bradley: I gave you that opening.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes.

A couple of other things that we, the NDP, are very passionate about—we've talked about child care. Quite frankly, there are very few families in this province who can survive on a one-person income. If you can, if you are in a fortunate enough position that you can survive on a one-person income, or you can flourish, that's great. But there are very few families that can. The reality is that we have to come up with a child care system that allows both partners to get back into the workforce as quickly as they want to. We don't need to force them back into the workforce, but they have to have that option.

That's why we have proposed a child care system. For families who make a gross income of under \$40,000, the child care system will be free. For people who have a family income of over \$40,000, it will be on a graduated scale, with an average rate of \$12 per child. That's going to allow people to get back into the workforce sooner, at the time of their choosing. Actually, it's going to be better for our economy because people are going to work much more confidently. It's going to be better for the kids. It's a case where, as society changes, government has to change with society. We have proposed that. We are going to continue to push that. That's one thing from

the NDP: It's no surprise we push for social programs. We believe in people. But we know, if you're going to push for social programs, to pay for those social programs, people need good jobs. We know that. That's not a surprise, either.

Something else that we instinctively know: The people who take the risks to create those jobs need to be rewarded for those risks. We are not opposed to corporations making money. We believe that everyone should pay their fair share. And as long as you're paying your fair share, if as a government we can help you be more successful, we will.

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: The member from Oshawa is reminding me that with pharmacare we are helping employers because that's less of a cost to the employer. We want to be your partner as an employer. We're not anti-employer, because if you're successful as an employer, regardless of your size, the province is more successful. We're just saying that everyone in this province has to pay their fair share so that everyone in this province has a life that the rest of us can all be proud of.

I think that, perhaps, as MPPs we are in a unique position, because I wasn't aware of some of the issues that are happening in our province—I actually have three constituency offices—until I see those people come through the doors. Until you see those people through your doors, how many times a day do we all say, “This can't be happening in our Ontario”? How many times? I'm sure the government members have the same thing: “This can't be happening in our Ontario.”

We need to step up. This government has had their chance to step up, and in many cases—

Mr. James J. Bradley: It has.

Mr. John Vanthof: In a few cases, you've made an attempt, but in many cases, particularly in this government's dying days—to come to the plate now and say, “We're going to the hospital hallway crisis” when you were there as it was being created? That's a bit much. Going back to where I started close to an hour ago, with the hallway medicine, with long-term care, everyone knew specifically, especially a government with 15 years of access to ministries, to researchers—they knew exactly, almost to the day, where the crises were going to happen. They failed—no, they didn't fail. They decided—they decided—not to act. That's worse.

Mr. James J. Bradley: Fifty-two hospitals in Saskatchewan, you closed.

Mr. John Vanthof: The member from St. Catharines has been here a long time. I have a deep respect for him. He knows exactly how to heckle so that you lose the point of the speech.

Miss Monique Taylor: You're on your last minute.

Mr. John Vanthof: My last minute? Cool.

They have decided over last 15 years, and specifically in the last four, where to spend the money and where not to. At this point, to say, “We're going to put a whole bunch of money in hospitals after starving them for so long, and we're going to create long-term beds after

helping build the shortfall for so long”? That is the reason why the people of Ontario are going to say, “Fool me twice? I don't think so.”

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Because this was the leadoff by the New Democrats, there are no questions and comments, so I'll ask for further debate.

1530

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Before I begin my debate this afternoon, I do want to extend my thoughts and prayers to those affected by a tragic incident earlier this afternoon at Yonge and Finch here in the city of Toronto, and to send a big thank you to the first responders at the scene of this incident here this afternoon.

I do want to also say that I will be sharing my time with the member from Guelph, the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, and the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Speaker, last week I had the opportunity to rise in the House and debate a little bit on this bill. I wasn't able to get through it all, but I wanted to come back to something that is very near and dear to my heart, as the mother of two young children. It just seems like the other day they were still in child care and needing the care of others. They always need the care of others, right?

But something I continuously hear at the doors—Davenport is home to many young families moving into the riding, and lots of children, a lot of young children. I remember being at one of our community events last summer and I couldn't believe the number of strollers that were now in the park—very different than the summer before.

I'm very proud that our budget focuses on initiatives that really make life that much easier and more affordable to Ontarians, to those people living in my riding of Davenport, but really for everyone across the province. The 2018 budget does make significant new investments in health care, child care, home care, and mental health, and delivers new measures to create more job opportunities for people across the province.

Just last week, I did have the opportunity to host an event in my riding at St. Helen's Children's Place, at the EarlyON program there. We talked about providing more options for families by making preschool child care free for children aged two and a half until they are eligible for kindergarten.

This has been very much welcomed in my riding of Davenport. I know that when I'm out knocking on doors, this is something that people raise with me and say, “Thank you to your government for introducing this. It's very, very important.” Not only is it saving a family with one child \$17,000 on average, it actually builds on the savings that families are getting with the implementation of full-day kindergarten, which people still, today, thank our government for doing.

Mr. Speaker, this is important. It's important that families have a choice when it comes to daycare, that they don't have to think about whether the mother is going to go back to work or not. I refer to the mother because, oftentimes, it is the mother who is home with—

Mr. Arthur Potts: Dads too.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: That's right. Dads do stay at home. I met two stay-at-home dads last week at St. Helen's Children's Place, and I know that my own husband stayed at home for a little while as well.

But it often is the mother who does stay home. There's a lot of discussion as to whether or not it's viable for her to go back to work because of her income or because of the cost of child care. So these are families who are very, very thankful for what our plan includes with regard to free child care.

Having this in our budget not only allows the mother to think about going back to work—which is a good thing, because that means that her career can continue to thrive, that she continues to get increases in her pay, and that we are shrinking, if you will, and lessening the wage gap between woman and men, mostly due to the fact that woman stay home for as long as they do to take care of their children.

People have asked me, “What's the difference between what your government is offering and what the NDP are now offering?” Mr. Speaker, if you'll indulge me, I'm just going to refer to an article in the *Toronto Star* from today that has Gordon Cleveland, an economist from U of T, who was instrumental in the plan that we currently have in our budget for free child care. He refers to the two-page NDP plan for child care as “completely unrealistic.” There's actually a mother quoted in the article as well—I don't have her name here in front of me right now—but she says that it looks like the Liberal plan is more doable because there is more thought that went in that plan.

Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, that as much as free daycare seems very enticing to people, and I understand that, and perhaps the ones that make a little bit more money should be the ones who pay for daycare—I think, as being proposed by the NDP, at \$12 a day or less—what their plan fails to do is to invest in daycare in general. When you are thinking about the fact that there are only 60,000 licensed child care spaces for this age group across the province and you look at what the NDP are proposing, in their third year of mandate, the demand for preschool spaces in this age group would actually exceed 181,000 spots, when we currently only have 106,000 spots. Their plan is not actually investing in the construction of new spaces, in being able to build on what our government has already done with regard to child care and building child care for those children and infants across the province.

I'm going to just quote Mr. Cleveland here again, where he says, “The NDP plan would result in huge space shortages and long waiting lists, rather than affordable child care.” Their plan would actually go against what they continuously talk about here in the House, which is to create more affordable spaces and get rid of the long waiting lists. In fact, what their plan would do is, it would increase that. We would have huge waiting lists and space shortages in the province for child care.

I'm very proud of what this government is doing with regard to child care and what our plan actually states,

because if you're serious about national child care or universal child care, then we're talking about doing what our government is doing. I'm proud of what we're doing and I will stand behind that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to join in the debate on the budget motion today. I thought I would maybe start off by responding to a few of the points that the member for the NDP made in their leadoff.

He talked a bit about hydro accounting, electricity accounting. He gave the impression that somehow the government had just pulled something out of the air and, “Where on earth did that come from?”

I think it's important to understand that Ontario Power Generation has been using rate-regulated accounting for a very long time and it is, in fact, approved by the Auditor General. It's also important to know that, when Hydro One was on the Ontario books, it used rate-regulated accounting, and it was approved by the Auditor General. It's also important to know that when the Ontario Power Authority existed, it used rate-regulated accounting, and it was approved by the Auditor General.

In fact, IESO, the Independent Electricity System Operator, has now taken over the function of OPA. When the controller said, “Do you know what?”—she found out there was a second set of books, and that there was \$17 billion in activity that wasn't showing up on the provincial books, which would if you went back to the old OPA way of recording the same transactions. That's why IESO is now using rate-regulated accounting to keep track of exactly the same transactions that OPA used to use rate-regulated accounting for and had it approved by the Auditor General.

So I totally reject the notion that rate-regulated accounting appeared from nowhere and that no Auditor General in Ontario has ever approved it. In fact, the existing Auditor General already is approving rate-regulated accounting at other electricity system utilities.

The other thing I wanted to briefly mention in my remarks—because, Speaker, you and I share a wonderful part of southern Ontario, as does the member over there in Lambton, Middlesex and something else—

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Kent.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: —is some of the things that are of interest there. You will be interested to know that the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund and the Eastern Ontario Development Fund together—there's actually an investment in this budget of \$100 million, because we find that those are some of our most popular development funds.

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I know there have been many investments in my riding and many investments in your riding, Speaker, that have come from the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund. That is being topped up in this budget, so we can continue to help our great businesses in southwestern Ontario.

Another thing that people in rural and northern Ontario have been asking us for is better access to broadband. This is a huge deal. There is \$500 million in new dollars going into broadband for rural and northern Ontario.

I know, whenever I talk to a mayor from rural Ontario or from northern Ontario, that their number one ask is to make sure that we get broadband into rural and northern Ontario, because, in fact, what leads to economic development in some of those communities is access to that.

So great things are happening. I'd love to say some stuff about the environment and climate change and cap-and-trade, but I'm going to turn it over to the minister to do that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

Hon. Chris Ballard: I really am delighted to be able to stand up and speak once again about this provincial budget.

I can say that when the member opposite led off, he might have suggested that this party has been sitting idly by, and it has not. I wanted to dissuade the viewers at home of that notion. This government has been very hard at work.

I looked through the budget, and there are very few things that came as a real surprise to me, because virtually all of the budget is building on past initiatives, building on things we have been working on in the past—year-over-year increases in key priorities, things like health care.

It was about a year ago that I was able to announce a \$5.7-million increase to funding for Southlake Regional Health Centre, and under this budget, we are able to, hopefully, bring another \$8.2 million to that fantastic facility as well.

The list goes on. Long-term care: We have had that in the plan. We are allocating those 5,000 beds before the writ drops, and then another 30,000, plus redeveloping 30,000 after that. These are issues, these are priorities, that have been in the pipeline for a long time. These are things we have been building on.

One of the things that strikes a real chord in my riding is the area of mental health. Part of the budget that we brought forward allocates 12 new adult mental health beds at my local hospital. But that \$2.1-billion investment in mental health right across the province is on top of significant investments that our government has made in the past four years toward mental health.

The list goes on. Transit, whether it be our local transit, whether it be Metrolinx and improved GO train service—these aren't new. These are priorities that we have been building on for many, many years. Education, colleges, university; child care, as my colleague so eloquently spoke about a couple of minutes ago—all of these things have been priorities. The list goes on.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Scandals. Mismanagement. Hoodwinking.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Not on our watch.

Hon. Chris Ballard: I seem to be in between a debate, Speaker.

This morning, I had the opportunity to sit down with one of the two chambers of commerce in my riding of Newmarket–Aurora to talk to them about the Vote Prosperity platform that they've put forward. We had a very good discussion. They were very interested to hear about four of our key pillars when it comes to jobs and economic growth. They were pleased to hear that Ontario's growth continues at about 2%. Quite frankly, we're beating Canada in that growth; we're beating the G7 in that growth, that ongoing GDP growth of 2%.

I don't think people realized, around the table, until I told them, that our unemployment is the lowest it has been, right now, since 2000. It has not been lower since that time. So, the list goes on and on and on—good things happening. In fact, Ontario leads Canada in direct foreign investment. We are number one in Canada, and in the top five for North America. That shows business confidence in this province, that foreign businesses are willing to locate here and they are willing to invest here.

Very briefly, because I want to share the time with my colleague, we are building Ontario's talent advantage. We are improving Ontario's business competitiveness. We are accelerating and diversifying our trade, and we are investing in infrastructure. All of those things will continue to make and keep Ontario a prosperous place to work.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Hon. Laura Albanese: I'm also pleased to join in the debate on budget 2018, which, as you've heard, makes significant new investments in health care, in child care, in home care and in mental health, as referenced by my colleague from Newmarket–Aurora.

It aims to focus on initiatives that, overall, try to make life more affordable for everyone in our province, and tries to achieve greater financial security—that's what you would call it. Because although the economy has been growing and has been stronger—the unemployment rate is the lowest that it has been in the last two decades—some people are struggling to take care of themselves, to take care of the people they love.

I'm going to choose to speak about the people that we love and that we try to help and to assist as much as we can—as, perhaps, daughters, like me. My mother is 88 years old. She lives with my husband and I. In my riding, also, I have the privilege to represent a great number of seniors. I see that many of them have a hard time making ends meet on a fixed pension, with the costs of life rising every day—just because that's the way it goes, with inflation and all.

Many seniors in my community would really benefit from the expansion of OHIP+. This is a historic investment that the province will be making. Everyone 65 and over would have free access to 4,400 prescription drugs. That means no deductibles, no annual deductible and no copay. It would save a senior an average of \$240 a year.

Another program that would kick in next year, and which is very popular with the seniors I speak to, is the healthy home program. The government knows—and we know, I think, everyone in our constituencies—that our seniors want to live independently at home for as long as possible, but they need some help. Sometimes the difference between being able to remain at home or going into a retirement home or a long-term-care home means receiving that little bit of help. So we are providing seniors that are 75 years or older with up to \$750 annually to help with the expenses, the cost of maintaining their homes. For seniors who own a home, it could be shovelling the snow or cutting the grass; for those who are renting, it could be just to help with some cleaning expenses. It would provide essential relief for some seniors, who would see in this the difference between being able to stay in their home versus having to give it up. That makes a great difference for our seniors.

Another initiative our government is implementing is Aging with Confidence. There is a one-stop website and 24-hour phone service in 150 languages. That's because we live in a very diverse province and we want to provide services to our seniors in their own language—to understand the details better of the programs and the services that are provided to them.

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Another thing that I want to mention is the active living centres. I have some of those in my riding: the York West Active Living Centre, Reconnect, Syme 55+ and 40 more in the whole province. That helps a lot.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonnell: It's always interesting to get up and speak for the residents of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry.

The Liberals seem to be—I'm not sure what they're talking about. They can't be talking about their budget, because it just doesn't seem to ring true. They talk about long-term-care beds, mental health—I remember not so long ago, in last six months, actually, where we had opposition day motions that they voted down, saying we didn't need more long-term-care beds.

In my riding, I've heard of developments that have been given two weeks to rush in an application. That doesn't sound like a lot of planning. To say that they've been planning this for many years—I know that, as I heard earlier, in 2003 they committed to more long-term-care beds. We just haven't seen them built in 15 years. It's just another promise that this government—it's the old promise made, promise broken. We've heard that over and over again.

Interesting points here—they're talking about some of the results from the Liberal reign. During that time, which is 2007 to 2016, Ontario finished seventh out of 10 Canadian provinces in the average annual GDP—not first, like they somewhat brag about—eighth in private sector job growth—half of what the Canadian average was—and ninth in accumulated debt per person. The record, I guess you would have to describe, is nothing less than dismal.

You can spend all the money you want, and they're certainly good at that. I like the quote I heard on the weekend about cap-and-trade: "It's time to cap taxes and maybe trade this government." I think that's what the people of Ontario are telling us, and I think it's time that we move on and get to somebody who is going to bring up some real growth in this province and bring back the good-paying jobs, not the minimum wage—this government has the number one minimum wage jobs—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure for me to address some of the comments by the member from Davenport on child care.

I just want to say, it must take a special kind of gall to stand up in this House after 15 years of Liberal governments neglecting the early learning and care file with such fervour and such intensification, because this is the record that you have left the province of Ontario: Right now it's \$9,000 to \$20,000 for annual fees—among the highest in Canada. Twenty-two per cent of families can only afford child care because they can only find child care; 63% said that they would use a licensed spot if they could find one—161,000 licensed spots in Ontario with over 500,000 children needing quality child care. Only 23% of the children can be accommodated in licensed child care, where children are safe, where quality is monitored.

I have to tell you, Mr. Speaker: The largest barrier for women in Ontario to find child care is in the infant and the toddler—that is the barrier for them to enter the workforce. Twenty-eight per cent of the women in this province say they only work part-time because they can only find part-time care. So we looked at where the backlog was.

It's very rich for the member to comment on Mr. Cleveland. Mr. Cleveland wrote this report. That's like saying KPMG signed off on the hydro scheme—because they wrote the scheme.

Quite honestly, our plan focuses on the not-for-profit and investing in public services. It goes back to the very people who actually build the system, which are the early childhood educators, and it removes the profit agenda from child care, because child care is a basic education. It is a basic service which strengthens the whole province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Arthur Potts: It gives me great pleasure to have a chance to comment on my colleague's debate today on the budget bill. I'm particularly proud of the comments from my colleague the member from Davenport, as she did very clearly outline the very stark differences between the NDP daycare plan and the one that we put forward here, which is reasonable, which is well thought out.

I find it rich for the member from Kitchener-Waterloo to be at this level of criticism after 15 years. I'm so proud of this member who got elected with me in 2014 with a

Premier who was only elected as Premier five years ago, because she put a focus on this issue, and we have been delivering on this issue since the day we got into this office in 2014. I'm very proud of her and proud of the analysis she did.

I'm particularly proud because one of the things she was pointing out in the NDP plan is that they get rid of the whole concept of private daycare operators. There's no room for the private sector. That will remove tens of thousands of daycare spaces across the province. I really hope people understand that difference and that they don't go down that route.

I also had a chance to listen to the member from Guelph as she explained, very clearly—and this is the previous Treasury Board president; she really understands how the finances of this province work. She explained very clearly how rate-regulated accounting can work and does work in utilities in this province, and how appropriate it is for the IESO to have rate-regulated—and there may be a difference of professional opinion between the Auditor General and other of her peers across the province, but that is a policy decision we took.

She may not like our policy decisions. She's there to advise. We can take her advice or not, but the fact is, it's inappropriate in this place, because if you were to take all of the investments that are attached to the generation of power and put them on the tax base, we don't know what that would do to our credit rating, because those are riskier investments. It's more appropriate to have risky investments associated with the generation of power on the rate base and not on the tax base.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm pleased to rise to add a comment to the debate over the budget motion here this afternoon. I'll be up shortly to sort of outline my views and those views that I'm hearing across my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex.

I would like to begin by recognizing the member from Guelph. She mentioned in her comments that she was down in southwestern Ontario. I was honoured to have her in Wallaceburg at the Sydenham hospital. We did an announcement a couple of weeks ago, and as I said that day, I do wish you all the best. I know you're not running in the next election, but thank you for your service to Ontario.

I did say that day in Wallaceburg too that although we come from different stripes politically, her maiden name is MacNaughton. Of course, my name being McNaughton, we did highlight that down in Wallaceburg at the hospital that day.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: He's a "Mc"; I'm a "Mac."

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Yes, her last name is "Mac," and I'm "Mc," but we don't need to talk about that.

I just wanted to highlight quickly—and I know this wasn't really brought forward by the Liberals, but my concern with this budget, again, is the debt and the deficit. When this government was elected back in 2003,

I believe the debt in Ontario was \$138 billion. This year it's going to hit a record \$325 billion.

What's even worse than that, Mr. Speaker, is that there is no plan to balance the budget over the next four or five years, much like the NDP platform. The Liberal budget is going to add about \$32 billion in additional debt over the next four years. I think that for my daughter and for future generations here in Ontario, it is just the wrong direction to move this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. The member for Davenport can now reply.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Thank you to everyone who weighed in this afternoon and had a chance to speak on this particular bill. I'm just going to go back to Gordon Cleveland and the analysis and studies that he and his team did. What the analysis showed was that actually focusing on one age group first, such as we have said in our plan that we're going to be doing with regard to child care, focusing on that two and a half years to four years old, is actually doing the right thing. It's a way to ensure that we actually have a better daycare system at the end of the day.

All of this information was available to the NDP, but of course, they chose to ignore it. What they are doing with their plan will actually—they keep saying, "Decrease the wait times. Get rid of the wait times." The member from Kitchener Centre, I believe it is—

Mr. Arthur Potts: Kitchener-Waterloo.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Kitchener-Waterloo, sorry—spoke to the fact that we need to have more spaces and that parents can't find enough spaces for daycare. What they are proposing in their plan, as I referred to earlier, would actually decrease the number of spots, because there is absolutely no investment in building the daycare system as we have up until now.

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I understand also what the member from Kitchener-Waterloo referred to when I quoted Gordon Cleveland, who was the author of this particular plan. So I get what she's saying, that perhaps that's a little bit biased. But I'm going to quote a mother who was quoted in the Star today, Carrie Schoemer, who said, "I just think the Liberal plan is more thought out and ultimately more doable."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: It's always a pleasure to stand in this House and speak for my constituents in Perth-Wellington. I'm certainly pleased to talk for a few minutes about the budget 2018, otherwise known as the Liberal Party re-election plan.

Unfortunately, I can't say that I'm pleased with the actual budget. This document is, in a word, astonishing. It borrows billions of dollars to pay for expensive pre-election spending promises. Thanks to this government's fiscally careless approach, Ontario taxpayers are now burdened with \$325 billion in debt. Interest on the debt is \$12.5 billion this year—more than a billion dollars a

month just to service the debt. That's going to fall on the heads of our children and grandchildren.

The Liberals don't seem to care about the long-term effects of this staggering debt. Let's not forget it was the member for Mississauga–Streetsville who said, "We have tripled [the debt] and we're proud of it." Proud of tripling the debt—incredible. With that attitude, it's no wonder Moody's Investors Service downgraded their outlook for Ontario's credit rating from stable to negative.

What's worse, they pointed to budget 2018 as a reason for their downgrade. Specifically, Moody's said that the budget 2018 "highlights growing spending pressure that will need to be addressed in the near future." They also noted that, "The province's debt is expected to measure 233% of revenues in 2017-18, up from Moody's previous estimate of 227%." Two hundred and thirty-three per cent of revenues in 2017-18: That's a deeply troubling ratio.

We're paying the consequences as a province, too. I'm reminded of the words of my honourable colleague from Simcoe–Grey, who eloquently said last week, "Private sector job growth? Ontario is third-last. New debt per capita? Next to last. Real median household income? Dead last. As we can see, this government has been responsible for the decline of Ontario's once-powerful economy. At one time, Ontario was the engine of Canada's economy. Now it lags behind because of this government's destructive policies." I agree with him. It's a truly sad state of affairs.

This budget doesn't just run a massive deficit and pile on the debt, either. It also raises taxes on individuals and businesses, to the tune of \$2 billion over the next three years. The personal income tax hike alone will take \$227 million out of the pockets of hard-working families. And the punishing new business taxes will hit over 20,000 businesses.

Businesses are already struggling under a cap-and-trade carbon tax, skyrocketing hydro rates and other reckless Liberal policies. Indeed, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce recently stated, "Budget 2018 has chosen to follow the federal government's lead on changes to the tax code, resulting in a new tax burden on Ontario employers of nearly half a billion dollars over the next three years." That's not to mention the sudden increase in the minimum wage and other drastic changes brought in under Bill 148.

Small businesses all over the province are hurting as a result of this government's crass political agenda. A small business owner in my riding, Sarah Drake, recently wrote me with concerns about the new holiday pay formula. I'll quote a few lines from her message:

"Like all small businesses, I have observed that the new labour legislation effective January 1, 2018, is extremely unfair to employers, particularly the new formula for calculating statutory holiday pay.

"For a small business, the cost of paying for statutory holidays is enough of a burden, and now it is worse.

"I'm sure you will gather lots of complaints about this. For your statistics, I would like to report that the new

formula has increased the cost to my business by 60% for each stat holiday."

Now, I understand that the Liberals are desperate to cling to power. That's why they are running a nearly \$7-billion deficit to finance their pre-election spending spree. But there's a big disconnect between the government's smooth rhetoric and what they will actually do.

Looking back over the past 15 years, we see a long trail of Liberal waste, scandal, mismanagement, massive debt and tax hikes. Here are just a few of the most egregious examples: \$8 billion wasted on eHealth; \$1.1 billion spent on the gas plant scandal, plus a criminal conviction and jail time for a former senior aide to the Premier; \$2 billion on smart meters; a \$6.2-million salary for the CEO of Hydro One. And let's not forget the almost \$54,000 spent on Canada Goose jackets.

This budget changes none of that. It just makes it worse. In fact, it just confirms that the Liberals will say anything and do anything to stay in power.

Speaker, I'd like to explore a few of the areas where the government is suddenly interested in fixing the problems it created. I want to show that, despite their claims, this government's legacy is mostly empty promises and cynical politics.

Long-term care is a prime example. With the aging baby-boomer generation, the senior population in Ontario is expected to nearly double to 4.6 million by 2041. We know that right now, more than 32,000 seniors are on the waiting list for long-term care. Without increased capacity, that wait-list is projected to balloon to almost 50,000 by 2021. This situation is reaching a crisis point, Speaker.

The government used the budget to reannounce last year's promise of 30,000 new long-term-care beds over the next 10 years. I support that goal. Those beds are desperately needed, especially in rural and small-town Ontario. Unfortunately, I think that promise is not worth the paper it's printed on. After all, it was this same Liberal government that made an eerily similar promise during an election year, in 2007. They claimed they would redevelop 35,000 outdated long-term-care beds in 10 years. When all was said and done, they only delivered about one third of that number.

I know my colleagues on the other side like to use the term "stretch goal" to describe that sort of thing. On this side of the House, we call it a broken promise.

In Perth–Wellington, we know the importance of having long-term-care beds in our community. Last spring, the government was reviewing a proposal that would have shut down a local nursing home, Hillside Manor, and moved up to 50 beds to London. Our community came together and spoke with a strong, unified voice against closing Hillside and transferring beds out of our area. We launched a petition, and over 3,800 concerned residents signed it. I introduced a motion calling on the government to halt the bed transfer, which was debated and supported by all parties in the Legislature. In this case, the ministry eventually announced that Hillside and its 90 beds would stay in the community. Our efforts were successful.

But the long-term-care issue is about much more than just one home in a single community. I recently wrote an open letter to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, making that very point. If I may, I'd like to read that letter into the record:

"Dear Minister:

"After years of neglect, we need you to commit to—and fund—new long-term-care beds for Perth–Wellington. My constituents have experienced years of growing waiting lists at many homes throughout our area. They understand that we are not 'over-bedded,' as your government has misleadingly suggested.

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"Under your government's watch, Ontario has a crisis in long-term care; we in Perth–Wellington have experienced it, too. This crisis comes despite the very best efforts of long-term-care homes in our area. Many new admissions come with increasingly complex needs. Homes are also coping with staff shortages—especially as it concerns personal support workers (PSWs)—with no effective plan from the province to address them. Costs, which your government has exacerbated, keep rising. At the same time, funding has been flat-lined.

"We acknowledge that your government promised, in the run-up to an election, to increase the number of long-term-care beds in Ontario by 5,000 between now and 2022, and by 30,000 before 2027. These beds are needed. In light of your government's past performance in this area, however, people are understandably skeptical.

"I was very pleased to learn that a number of long-term-care homes, in both Perth and Wellington counties, responded to your government's request for proposals to accept new beds. For all of the homes that have contacted me and requested my support, I have written directly to you to endorse their applications. I reiterate that support today.

"It was beyond disappointing, however, to read recent news reports stating that Perth county is 'not a priority area' for your government when it comes to new beds. I also understand that your government told long-term-care administrators in Perth county that because they are in the county, they should not even bother applying. If true, this would be a massive mistake.

"As we have said many times: the 'bed ratio'—that is, the number of beds per 1,000 people at least 75 years of age—is the wrong metric to evaluate the unique needs of various areas. Bed ratios do not account for demographic shifts to rural and small-town Ontario. They do not account for the growing population under age 75, people who also need long-term care because of chronic illness, disability and so on. They do not account for added costs to smaller local hospitals and municipal ambulance services, which would have to transport patients over greater distances. Finally, bed ratios do not account for long travel distances, sometimes in dangerous winter conditions, that families would have to drive to visit loved ones. It is amazing to me that your government has yet to acknowledge these basic facts.

"Again, I want to repeat my unequivocal support for every long-term-care home throughout Perth–Wellington

that has applied for new beds. Our administrators have made the case that they need them, and our area would clearly benefit from them.

"I would appreciate your response to this matter, and all of the issues I have raised. Thank you for your consideration."

I hope to hear back from the minister soon. Thousands of residents of Perth–Wellington and across the province are paying close attention to how the government handles the issue of long-term care.

Another issue the Liberals have shown a sudden interest in is developmental services. For almost a decade, the government froze the budgets of developmental service agencies and allowed the Passport Program wait-list to balloon. Bill 148, with its drastic employment and labour law changes, only pushed agency budgets closer to the brink. Now, just six weeks before an election, the government is promising \$1.8 billion over three years. That's a welcome investment, and long overdue, but that's only part of the solution.

The Ombudsman's 2016 Nowhere to Turn report highlighted many problems in the way developmental services are delivered in the province. Throwing more money at such a complex problem—

Mr. James J. Bradley: Is that the Tory candidate?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): The chief government whip will come to order.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Thank you, Speaker.

The Ombudsman's 2016 Nowhere to Turn report highlighted many problems in the way developmental services are delivered in this province. Throwing more money at such a complex problem isn't going to magically fix things. The government's mismanagement of this issue has unfortunately left a lot of people with developmental disabilities and their families in a difficult spot. They need to know that the government will have their backs all the time, and not just in the last months leading up to an election.

This week, the Globe and Mail published an article about 28-year-old Duncan McDonald. He is a resident of Guelph, Ontario, who has Down syndrome. For years, Duncan has been employed through contracts with organizations that provide vocational day programs. These are local non-profits that hire people with cognitive and physical disabilities to do work in sheltered workshops. This type of job allows a worker to perform duties at a pace that matches his or her abilities. These job opportunities are a wonderful experience. They give people like Duncan a sense of purpose, a routine to plan their day around and an expanded network of friends.

Unfortunately, for about a month now, Duncan has been without work, as a result of this government's Bill 148. Duncan's employer can't afford to pay him at the new \$14 minimum wage, so he has let him go.

I found the quote from the MCSS official in the article especially troubling. In response to sheltered workshops closing, he said, "Some individuals with developmental disabilities may prefer to focus on community participation, such as volunteering or recreational opportunities."

Well, that's fine as far as it goes, but what kind of a paycheque does a volunteer bring home? What about people like Duncan, who want to work and earn a bit of money? Apparently, the government thinks they should just do volunteering or sign up for recreational opportunities instead. This government talks about fairness and doing what is right, but where's the fairness when you strip away the dignity of paid work?

This is happening all over the province. Everyone deserves to feel like they're an integral part of their community, including with paid work. This government is taking that away.

Again, there is a real disconnect between this government's talking points and what they actually do. They claim to care about creating fairness, but their record on issues like long-term care and developmental services is seriously lacking.

This government claims to respect taxpayers' money, yet under their watch, Ontario has seen nine budgetary deficits since 2008-09.

Last year, the finance minister stood in this place and boasted that he'd balanced the books. However, the Auditor General recently called the government's accounting methods "bogus." Bogus, Speaker: That's a strong word with a strong message.

The reality is that Ontarians can't afford four more years of this government. They have watched their hydro bills skyrocket and their cost of living go up. People are working harder than ever and getting less and less.

While families are struggling to make ends meet, we have watched the Liberals hand out rewards to their special friends and insiders, and they are continuing to show flagrant disrespect for taxpayers' money.

Over the last three weeks, the government has done a total of 39 campaign-style announcements. They claim that the purpose is to promote the budget, but in reality, the Premier is spending public money to trash the PC Party and our new leader, Doug Ford. With an estimated cost of \$7,500 per event, the Liberals have wasted almost \$300,000 so far on these partisan announcements. Following a complaint from the PC Party, we've also learned that the Liberals are now under investigation by Elections Ontario for this practice.

Speaker, the people of Ontario aren't stupid. They see this pre-election budget for what it is: a desperate attempt to cling to power by a tired and cynical government. As PC leader Doug Ford is fond of saying, the party with the taxpayers' money is over. Ontarians can't afford this budget, and the PC Party can't afford to support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to join the debate and offer some commentary on the member from Perth-Wellington's 20-minute hit on the budget motion.

There's very little that we agree with, with regard to the Conservative direction as far as this election goes. Of course, we're not really quite sure where they are going, because they don't really have a platform or they haven't planned to cost out anything.

That said, the area of concern we share is the way that these announcements have come out from the government. It sort of doubles back on what the Auditor General identified as partisan advertising over the last four years, particularly in the so-called unfair hydro scheme, which the Globe and Mail did an excellent exposé on this weekend, showing the shell game which is the financing in the energy ministry as it pertains to the selloff of Hydro One and the refinancing of debt in order to, for a very short time, bring down the prices of hydro.

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Fortunately, the people of this province are not buying it. They are not buying what the Liberals are selling. They don't know what the Conservatives are selling because they don't have a platform costed out or otherwise. I do think, though, that with all of this noise around pre-election stance, it takes away from the real issues we should be talking about, and that's hallway medicine, which was one of our questions this morning, or the state of our education system with the Fix Our Schools movement. Particularly in Toronto, some of the schools are in terrible shape.

The risk to our democracy is, when someone like Doug Ford opens his mouth and sucks up all the oxygen in the room, we stop talking about the real issues that the people of this province care about. But we do share the concerns with the way this government is advertising their election campaign.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. James J. Bradley: I was anticipating that the member, when he made his speech, would make reference to something that's great holiday gift ideas by a company called Stihl Canada that had on sale gas chain-saws and a variety of items that were for cutting purposes.

When I hear the member, it's always interesting, because like the Republicans in the United States, Conservatives tend to be deficit hawks when they're in opposition, but when they're in government, they tend to lose that edge, although I suspect the edge on those saws would be very sharp were they to attain power.

There's much in the budget that the member, I think, probably wanted to talk about. By the way, I want him to make reference to an induction into the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame that will be in his riding in, I think, the second full week of June this year.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Yes.

Mr. James J. Bradley: So I'll give a little plug to that. He and I are usually there for that in a very non-partisan or collegial way.

Back to the budget: There are so many good items in this budget. When I think of people on the Ontario Disability Support Program, for instance, who have a challenge meeting their daily needs, these individuals will be receiving an increase under the government plan of 3% three years in a row. So that, I think, will be very, very valuable to those individuals.

There's support for Ontario's public libraries, which have been asking for that kind of support. We know that

when I mention libraries and the name Ford in the same breath, it was the Ford brothers who wanted to slash library budgets at the municipal level. In fact, this particular document indicates clearly that the government will be supporting libraries. I suspect the member himself secretly, or openly, is a library supporter.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's always a pleasure to follow my colleague from Perth–Wellington. I can tell you that he always comes to Queen's Park on behalf of his people and puts the voice out there. One of those stories that we all read last week, and we just could not believe, was the story he shared of Duncan from Guelph. This may be an unintended consequence for the Liberal government, but it certainly was an unintended consequence, only for Duncan and his family. He lost his job, being able to provide a service to Community Living. He lost his dignity, he lost his sense of self-worth, Mr. Speaker, and he joined the line of the 300,000 people who have lost their manufacturing jobs as a result of this government.

I'm going to switch my thinking a little bit. The St. Catharines member, the chief government whip, talked a lot—and I always respect him. But he says that although I may differ in my opinion—he talked about something about cuts. I want to ensure that in this budget there was nothing mentioned about the 600 schools that were cut across the province of Ontario. He didn't mention that there were a ton of efficiencies in their budget, but they don't want to ever equate that to cuts.

I want to talk a little bit, Mr. Speaker—because the job growth they have identified will be cut by 50% over the next number of years. There's \$1 billion of corporate revenues they will not realize annually, which to me is a cut of money coming into those people in special interest. And what happens if interest rates rise? We all know interest rates will rise; it's just part of the process. What will they then cut out of programs and services on the front line, or what taxes will they raise? Let's not forget that there's a \$2-billion-more tax increase in this budget. They have actually run a \$6.7-billion deficit which, again, we all are going to pay more interest. That's money that's not going to the front lines. They already spend \$12 billion—\$1 billion a month—just on that.

They borrowed \$25 billion more for a hydro rebate which, they know full well, is not going to fix the hydro system.

Mr. Speaker, I am really very concerned. I think what we have to do is look at the best predictor of future action: the record of the past.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I listened intently to my friend from Perth–Wellington, but first I want to turn the pages of Hansard back a little bit to my good friend from Timiskaming–Cochrane, Mr. Vanthof. I was up in my office before I came down, listening to Gord Downie and the Tragically Hip.

I actually got to the House this morning—a little after 9.

I soon had a headache, not from the Hip, but listening to the Liberals whine.

I listened today as Mr. Vanthof unravelled the Liberal budget—one unbelievable clause at a time.

It seems the Liberals have a new alternative,

They're temporarily giving up on the party Conservative.

They're worried, you see—the polls show them ahead by a century.

So the Libs have led a pick on the NDP debate.

To which we say—too little, too late.

Speaker, as I summarize what I've heard in the House this afternoon on this budget measures bill, it just seems to me that we can't believe a lot of the stuff that's in there. We don't think they'll ever come into fruition, that the Liberals won't necessarily be in a position to implement anything that they've put forward in this budget.

But to my Conservative friends, I say don't count your chickens before they hatch. Don't put all your eggs into one basket. You have a party that is known to implode during elections. You have a party, we just heard, with a leader who sucks all the oxygen out of the room. We've just seen the leader go back on his words of a few weeks ago that all party nominations would be open, transparent and democratic. He has just closed that policy down and appointed 11 candidates. Who knows what to believe anymore, Mr. Speaker?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes your questions and comments. I go back now to the member for Perth–Wellington to reply.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: That was quite entertaining, the last number of minutes or so with the questions and comments.

To the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, I thought she was going to be quite—

Mr. Arthur Potts: Complimentary.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: —complimentary, because she started off that way, and then she went the other way, Speaker. It was unfortunate because our ridings are very close together. In fact, I was at a meeting with her this year and we got along very well—but anyway.

To the member from St. Catharines: Thank you for mentioning the hall of fame. That's after the election, so thank you for the vote of confidence that I'm going to win next time. I appreciate that.

In my critic role with MCSS I've seen so much heartache with people, not only the people who need the service, but certainly their families. We're continually working with their families trying to get the services that they've been promised in the past to help them along, and then when we hear stories about these poor, unfortunate people with developmental disabilities getting laid off from work because of policies and laws this government has brought forward, it's really truly heartbreaking.

To the member from Windsor–Tecumseh: It's always entertaining listening to you, sir. He actually went back to my farming roots when he started talking about

chickens. I don't know how many chickens he's raised in his time but maybe he has raised a few.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I've eaten a lot.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Yes, he has eaten a lot of chickens, apparently.

I think we do share a lot of the concerns with this budget that the government is bringing forward, how it's going to be very difficult to work and it's going to put us in a bad place in the future.

1630

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Once again, it's a pleasure to join the debate on the budget motion 2018.

To my friend from Perth-Wellington: No offence, specifically, but the context of this budget motion is very important, and it's actually quite timely.

It's hard for me not to think of the emotion at the doors, because I know that we're all knocking on doors. I do it throughout the whole year. It has been very interesting to see the response and the anger at the door, to be quite clear. Given the latest polling, that shows that 80% of Ontarians want change. They are desperate for change. This is the one thing that we know for sure.

Having those important conversations at the door—that's still a very important part of our democracy. You can have good social media platforms to work from, and you can have a good on-the-ground team that maybe makes phone calls, but having that face-to-face conversation with constituents, in all of our ridings, I think, is incredibly important.

What I learned this weekend is that people are angry at this Liberal government, and they've taken it very personally. I equate it to the fact that in 2014, there was the gas plants scandal, Ornge, eHealth and a few other things, but what makes them angry this time is that they get that hydro bill, so they have directly connected the energy portfolios and policies of this Liberal government to their lives. It's tangible. Of course, the government changed the billing. It used to be every two months. Now they get an angry bill every month. Some people have seen a reduction, but now that they know how you achieved those reductions, they're even angrier.

The more that this government does, the more cynical people get. I just want to say that that's a problem for all of us, because we want people to be engaged in this election and we want them to be informed.

What came from this budget, quite honestly—this government got a quick little bump, Mr. Speaker. They got a bump in the polls, because the Premier said that this was better than free. When she was talking about, I think, the preschool program, she said, "It's better than free." Nobody in this province believes that—nobody, Mr. Speaker. What they know for sure is that this government has made successive decisions on health care, on transit, on child care and especially on energy which have negatively impacted their lives. At the doors, they articulate it very well, Mr. Speaker.

I was really pleased to address some of the issues that I've cared about a lot for a long time, and one of those is early learning and care.

I first became a child care advocate when my son was born, which was 20 years ago. When I found that almost three quarters of my wages were going to be going to the Orde Street daycare, which is just down University, making that decision to stay engaged in the workforce, as a mother and as a woman, was very difficult.

So I got involved in the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, and I got on the board of the child care. I started learning where the fees go and why Ontario has the highest fees. To this date, after 15 years of Liberal government, Ontario still has the highest child care fees in Canada. That is indisputable. It's actually part of Gordon Cleveland's report to the government.

But that's not all, Mr. Speaker, because this government has had year after year after year to rectify the problem and to address the core issues. In fact, they even commissioned a report—and this one is actually from 2007. It's from the Ontario Expert Panel on Quality and Human Resources, chaired by Dr. Donna Lero. It made the recommendation that there should be an establishment of "provincial guidelines for wages, benefits, and working conditions for early learning and care" programs, and immediate increases in funding "to enable programs to implement substantial wage and benefit increases."

In the early learning and care field, the most important people are those who are directly delivering the service. Those people, those workers, should be respected. When you respect those people, then the quality of that child care goes up because you are investing in people. So did the Liberal government act on this report from 2007? No, they did not. They had their chance. So that's why it rings hollow for child care advocates, for activists, for parents across this province when they drop a budget like this and the Premier of this province says that this is better than free preschool—better than free.

The credibility of this government has been seriously compromised. More importantly, we are behind most provinces in this country on supporting an early learning and care program and funding that actually lifts women up—because when you lift women up, you actually lift the whole community up, and you lift children up.

The one thing from the Gordon Cleveland report, actually, because I have it here in front of me, is that he did recommend "a generous sliding scale of child care fees, where all families with earnings less than \$40,000 pay nothing," and "all families with incomes above \$240,000 pay 80%." Part of our child care plan is that for those families who make \$40,000, their child care will be free.

Earlier, the member from Davenport said that we didn't read the report. Of course we read the report, but we are addressing the serious barriers for women to access the workforce and access their educational opportunities, because when women do access those educational opportunities, they actually meet their economic

potential, and then we wouldn't need another piece of legislation like pay equity and pay transparency because women would be earning very good money. So we see this very much as a continuum.

The fact of the matter is that we focused on infant care and toddler care, because these are the most expensive and these are where the fewest spaces are. That is why we have a capital strategy to address the capital infrastructure, because you can have a great idea and you can say, "We're going to do this," but you have to show them the money. You've got to put the money on the table and you've got to build the spaces, because they don't come out of thin air. But of course, this Liberal government very much believes that child care is a business.

When we were developing our early learning and child care plan, we went back to the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care and said, "If you were to develop one right from the very beginning—your dream plan—what would underpin it, from a principle perspective?" They said, "Listen, you have to make it affordable. You have to include a sliding fee scale. These are some of the core principles." We have the highest child care fees in Canada and we have a long waiting list for fee subsidies. So you can have a great fee subsidy, but there's still a wait-list for it: "It's time for something better. The solution to the challenge of affordability is operational funding for programs and setting an affordable, geared-to-income, sliding-fee scale with a cap," which we did.

The second part was: "Decent work and professional pay for educators." Educators are the key to quality programs for our children. Recruiting and retaining the best staff requires professional pay and decent work. To achieve this, a provincial wage scale recognizing the level of education and experience must start at a certain level and with registered early childhood educators. So operational funding has to be part of it, and you have to pay the people who are doing the work—and these are primarily women.

This is still very much a female-dominated field. You have known this for 15 years. You have known this since 2007, since your own report. Your own committee told you that if you wanted to lift women up and build stronger communities, then you invest in the people who are doing the work. No plan will be successful in rebuilding child care in this province and undoing the damage of this government unless you invest in the people who are doing the work: the early childhood educators. That is a core principle of our plan.

The expansion of public and non-profit child care: This government will know that I brought a motion to the table to grandfather, going forward, that all investment not go to profits, not go to the shareholders, not be negotiated on the Toronto Stock Exchange. We are trading shares in child care in the province of Ontario at the Toronto Stock Exchange. Who would ever have thought that this government, this Liberal government, would accelerate to the degree that they have and double-down on privatization? Nobody bought that. Neoliberalism was a grain of salt at one point. It was a

seed. They planted it and it grew, and now we have huge, corporate, big-box child care in the province of Ontario. There are good people in that system, but not all of the funding is going to the children. It's not going to the nutrition, and it's not going to the professional development. It is going to the profit margin. That's where your tax dollars are going. If you want to build the system up, then invest the money strategically, with children at the centre. I could say that about almost every other file.

1640

Those are our key principles: the not-for-profit, the affordability, the sliding scale, and, of course, valuing the very people who do the work in our child care centres.

This research has been here for years. You commissioned this research. Had you acted, we would not be in the state where people pay between \$9,000 and \$20,000 in annual fees, which are amongst the highest in Canada. That's higher than post-secondary education. In some instances, that's higher than mortgage payments.

How can you build an economy up? How can you say that you value equality and equity, when you've had the tools at your disposal for 15 years to change the system and you failed to do so?

You can't really question the anger of people at the doors when they say, "What have you done to improve the lives of women and children in the province of Ontario?"

When you drop a budget like that and you call it "better than free," you have no credibility. It is just a fact. This government has no credibility, because they have burned the trust of the people of this province on several issues—and I want to touch on a couple of other ones.

This past week, I had a transit town hall. In 2014, the then Minister of Transportation, Glen Murray, came to Kitchener-Waterloo and he promised us two-way, all-day GO trains every 15 minutes for \$10. Then he doubled down and said, "Not only that, but we're going to get you a bullet train. We're going to get you a high-speed train that will supersede the GO train." I don't know where it was going to go—if it was going to go over the GO trains or if it was going to go through the GO train—

Hon. Daiene Vernile: Are you going to vote for it? We're looking forward to you voting for the budget.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Mr. Speaker, are you going to stand up?

In this budget, they said that they dropped \$11 billion in advance of an environmental assessment. So they have put, for the first time ever, this \$11 billion, which they have not researched, or they have no evidence that high-speed rail will even cost \$11 billion. They've commissioned an environmental assessment. Do you know why we know that they've done an environmental assessment? Because they've had three ribbon-cuttings for the environmental assessment. Yet it's going to take two more years—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): There is a lot of noise coming from the government benches. I can't

hear the member for Kitchener–Waterloo, and I need to hear her.

I apologize for the interruption. Member for Kitchener–Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you. I want you to hear me; I do.

The other part about the two-way, which came out in the transit hub—we had some great community support. The CEO of Thalmic Labs came out. They've just done a major investment in K-W. They are desperate for action. Right now, the train takes upwards of two hours. When I took it, it was two hours and 37 minutes. We can agree that this is not acceptable; right? In 2018, in the smartest community, the most intelligent community in Ontario, the Waterloo region, we should be able to figure out how to get that train faster than two and a half hours. I hope that we can agree on that.

But ahead of an environmental assessment, to already say that you're going to build the high-speed rail without doing the due diligence, without doing the consultation, without having an inclusive process actually dooms that whole project, and I'm going to tell you why. The communities across rural Ontario are already gearing up to fight the train. If you want high-speed rail to be successful, then you have to bring everyone along for the ride. They have to see the benefit in it for them.

At the transit town hall, we basically spent most of the time saying, "How can we work together to make two-way, all-day GO a reality?" That means a train from Toronto to Kitchener-Waterloo in the morning, because 25,000 people commute into our region.

I don't know where the funding went from the sell-off of Hydro One, but when I look at the public accounts for the last four years, this government had allocated infrastructure funding; they had allocated it for transit and for roads and for rail. However, they didn't spend it. So this leaves a big question mark as to whether or not they are serious, because I still don't have that commitment from the motion that I brought forward to the floor of this Legislature, which the Liberal government voted for, which said that we would have a timeline and a budgetary figure that would actually align with the project, with building two-way, all-day GO. I'm still waiting for that.

But suffice it to say, there is great interest in getting people from KW to Toronto, but also great interest in getting people from Toronto to KW. I want to give a shout-out to the three senior ladies who came out. They've been advocating for a faster train since 1982, and they had the report to show it. They're interested in coming to Toronto because they have medical appointments here and they have family here. They came as well.

The issue of health care has to be one of the more dominant issues that I hear at the door. I'm sure other people do as well. The issue of having seniors in our hospitals with no place to go is a very real issue, because there hasn't been that investment in long-term care. There was a big number in this budget, but it has taken a

long time to get to that number. I have to say, without the initial investment and without a quality home care program that isn't contracted out to every business available to do personal support worker work, it seems to me that several balls have been dropped on the health care model, including the transformation of the hospital funding model, which happened in 2011 and which was supposed to fix the problem. It was supposed to take into account rates of inflation. It was supposed to take into account the fact that innovation should be incorporated into the budgetary process. It was supposed to take into account regional pressures, actually, which one of our hospitals, St. Mary's, feels on a regular basis, particularly in their cardiac program. And it does not. Those five years where the health care budget was frozen were not helpful, because it really diminished the level of services and compromised that morale that is so important in our hospitals.

I don't know if you've seen that commercial. The SEIU, Unifor and I believe it's ONA—those three unions have come together and said, "Listen, we are at the tipping point. We are doing our best, but we need the Ontario government to recognize that hallway medicine and hospital care is at a crisis point." I've never seen this: three unions come together, pool their resources and fight together for change in hospitals.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: The OMA too.

Ms. Catherine Fife: The OMA; that's right.

The fact that so many people in KW and, obviously, in some of our rural and northern communities don't have access to a doctor is a major challenge because it puts that pressure point and that tension on our emergency rooms.

So there's transit; there's health care; there's child care. I just want to tell you, when I stand in this place, I always think of the people and the voices that I've heard over the course of the weekend. Last week, I did a home visit with Rita, who is 87 years old. Rita is 87 years old. She is the primary caregiver for her granddaughter Andrea, who is 38 years old. Andrea—in her own words, she has very little time left. She has been on a wait-list for assisted housing and supportive housing for over 12 years.

What have you been doing for 15 years that we've got to the point where an 87-year-old grandmother is the primary caretaker and full-time caregiver for her 38-year-old grandchild? That is indicative of a systemic breakdown in policy, in funding and, quite honestly, in integrity.

It's no secret that we will not be supporting this budget. This is not a real budget. This is pie in the sky or, as my mom says, "a unicorn in every backyard" kind of budget. Nobody is buying "better than free" from this government. Nobody is. I have given you a number of issues and policy points where this government has failed to deliver. Dropping a budget that has everything in it and nothing in it isn't good enough for the people of this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: It's a pleasure to stand and speak about Bill 31, our budget bill. It's very important, but the area that I'm going to concentrate on, of course, is child care.

1650

Our government has a clear priority to transform the way that child care is delivered in Ontario. In our budget, our government is making high-quality, licensed child care free to preschool children between the ages of two and a half to full-day kindergarten starting in 2020. Before that, from zero to two and a half, 60% of the spots are subsidized. Quite often in the first year, children are at home with their moms because of maternity leave—that's not always the case, but a very high percentage of the time.

In addition to full-day kindergarten, which already saves parents \$6,500 a year—this plan helps to ease the financial burden on tens of thousands of families across the province and has proven to be very, very popular.

I know that at the last election, as I went door to door, it was very clear that the official opposition wanted to get rid of full-day kindergarten, all-day kindergarten. I sure hope that that isn't their plan as we proceed to this election.

By investing \$2.2 billion over three years, we are providing free child care for preschoolers that will save families an estimated \$17,000 per child and allow parents to go back to work when they choose and help—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm very pleased to make a few comments on the speech that was just given by the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, but first I want to address something the member from Barrie just said. She spoke about going door to door in the last election. I'm sure it's very different this time around, because it's certainly different on this side, from what we're hearing at the door.

The member from Kitchener–Waterloo was focusing mostly—we're talking about the budget today, and she was focusing mostly on child care. It is a problem in the province of Ontario. We have some of the highest child care rates. Certainly in Canada we're the highest, and possibly in North America—some of the highest rates.

We have to look at things from the whole spectrum. We can't focus on just the child care, just the long-term care. We have to realize that people are giving us their hard-earned tax dollars, and they are expecting us to invest that money wisely, in the right type of programs and the things that people really need. It's not enough to say that we have the highest child care in the country. We have to sit down and we have to talk about why it's so inaccessible in so many communities. It's not just the costs, but it's the getting the children there and ensuring that continuity.

The member from Barrie spoke about all-day kindergarten. Well, all-day kindergarten was supposed to be a substitute for daycare so that there would have been programming before and programming after. It's not

enough to have child care from 9 o'clock to 3 o'clock in the afternoon when you're trying to work 9 to 5 and you need time to get to your job and get back.

So the planning wasn't perfect. It's not everywhere.

Interjection.

Mrs. Gila Martow: As my colleague is saying, there are huge wait-lists.

We need to have a government in place that understands about efficiencies, that understands how to implement technologies to make life better and easier, and to work with everybody in the province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I always am honoured to stand in this House after my friend from Kitchener–Waterloo has spoken and to hear the passion that she brings to this debate, the knowledge and the understanding with which she speaks.

She started off talking about the angry bills that people are getting and are still getting with their hydro costs. She talked about the highest child care bills in Canada. No matter where you go, people are angry in this province. They are angry at a government that's been there for 15 years.

We don't elect governments, as you know, Speaker; we toss them out. I think we could be on the verge of seeing that happening. I'm not predicting it; I'm just thinking it.

When you look at post-secondary education, when you see we have more sessionals than tenure-track professors teaching our kids and we're paying to have our children educated by sessionals—I'm not putting sessionals down, by any means, but we need more tenure-track professors at our colleges and universities. When you see that our post-secondary institutions aren't putting enough money into infrastructure, that's a scary thing as well.

What really troubles me about the budget is the way they hid the LIUNA handover to the carpenters' union deep inside the budget bill, which makes absolutely no sense, this precedent-setting move of stripping one union of its powers. Instead of going to the OLRB or some other quasi-judicial body to let them work it out there, they put it in a bill, they bring it in legislation, to give their friends in the carpenters' union something that has been commonplace on most job sites in Ontario. I don't get it.

Finally, I'm hoping to hear more about the unicorns in every backyard. I know that my eldest grandson, Fletcher, is hoping for that as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It's a pleasure to stand up and make some comments on the member from Kitchener–Waterloo.

I just want to address something before I get into the specifics. Both the NDP and the Conservatives: Where have you been for the last 15 years? Where have you been? That's why we're here.

I've been here for 12 years, Speaker. I know that some of them haven't been here that long, so they probably missed all the good stuff that we've done, but, for example: full-day JK and SK; the new schools that we built; family health teams that didn't exist before; and community health centres. These are just a few of the things that happened. Either they were asleep or they weren't here—just a reminder.

The member talked a lot about early childhood day-care. This past Friday or Saturday night—I'm confused about the dates right now—in my home town of Brighton, the YMCA of Northumberland did a fundraiser, like they do every year: a dinner and auction. They raised a few bucks. The Northumberland YMCA operates seven early years or child care spaces. I spoke to the CEO, Eunice, a good friend of mine. I go, "What's in our budget?" She says, "Lou, that's fantastic. This opens a whole new door for us to expand and provide"—this is from the YMCA. She did not have one negative thing to say.

It's frustrating when we hear negative, negative, negative. All I'm saying is that it's in our budget. It's going to be a good majority of our platform. I presume there will be other things, but I think we all need to support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. We return to the member for Kitchener–Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you to the members from Barrie, Windsor–Tecumseh, Thornhill and Northumberland–Quinte West.

Where have we been? We tried to work with your government during the minority government. We got the FAO here, which was amazing. But then we tried to negotiate the 15% reduction in auto insurance and the Premier called that a "stretch goal."

It turns out that everything was a stretch goal. Who would have even thought that you would have privatized the entire green energy plan and cost the province of Ontario \$37 billion more, as the Auditor General reported? What would \$37 billion do for hospitals and education and for health care?

Just to go back to the member from Barrie on full-day kindergarten: You know, that was also another report on how to strengthen early learning and care. Charles Pascal did that for two years as well. Then he recommended that you build in a seamless day in full-day kindergarten, so before and after, and that it be board-operated, because it would be a not-for-profit model. Then we would be using the built infrastructure that we've already invested in, we'd be strengthening communities and we would be building services where children are. But this government decided not to do that. Only five school boards in the province of Ontario had the backbone to follow through on your plan, and you didn't even support them. I know this because I was the chair of the Waterloo Region District School Board at that time.

Mr. Speaker, this is where we are right now. I understand, as the member from Northumberland–Quinte

West says, it's uncomfortable, but it is your record and you have to own it. This budget doesn't fix your record.

1700

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Hon. Nathalie Des Rosiers: I just want to make sure that I say I'm going to be sharing my time with the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport, the member for Kingston and the Islands and the member for Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mr. Speaker, a budget is about presenting a vision for Ontario. It's about exercising judgment about what's needed in Ontario and what will be needed in the future. This budget is really very much about what Ontarians and Ontario need to be able to continue to have the growth economy that it has had for the last little while and projected into the future. My comments will be about how it reflects the current situation and, more importantly, where we want to go as Ontario.

As you know, Ontario's economy has the lowest unemployment rate in 18 years. It has a growth unparalleled in Canada. It has a growth that is better than the G7 nations. And all of this growth presents a choice for government. It could decide to just keep going, to keep the status quo and not invest further in social programs. It could recognize the work that has been done and just keep on going. But that's not what this budget is all about.

This budget recognizes that the great growth in Ontario's economy has not benefited everyone, and indeed this budget is about confronting systemic inequalities that exist in Ontario, and that's why I'm proud of it. I'm a new politician and I am here because I want to create the institutional instruments that are necessary for Ontarians and Ontario to be ready for the challenges ahead. That's what this budget is all about.

Let me talk about a few things that this budget has that are future-oriented. The work that is being done in this budget is certainly to reduce the gap between the rich and the poor. If we do nothing, this economy will continue to grow, maybe, but certainly it will not continue to benefit and will not benefit people who are the lowest and the most vulnerable in our society.

In the budget, we recognize that something needs to be done. The market by itself does not redistribute wealth. You need actions from government, and this is what this budget does.

If the Conservatives got their way, they would simply continue to make cuts in government and not actually invest in what is needed to ensure that we are there to continue to have a population that benefits—that all of us benefit—from the growth in the economy.

This budget speaks to inequality in several ways. First of all, it does upgrade some of the rates for our lowest people in Ontario—ODSP and people on Ontario Works. It does provide some relief in affordability for the middle class, particularly when they don't have access to a plan to support pharmacare or dental care. That's an important aspect of this budget, Mr. Speaker, because it reflects the

fact that the new jobs of the future will be jobs that will require that people reinvent themselves often. There will be less stability so we need to create within our population the capacity to be resilient and to be innovative. Again, if you look in the budget, there is significant investment in infrastructure that creates jobs, that creates the opportunity to continue to have the ability to invest in what we need to grow.

It also has significant investment in the ability to create jobs in new sectors—the agrifood sector and new technology. It increases broadband access for rural and northern Ontario. That's designed to enable everyone to be participating in a technology-driven economy. This is what we're talking about. What do we need to invest now in our population so that we are ready in the future? I think that's what this budget is all about.

It also recognizes that we have to have significant investment in mental health, so that we build resilience within the population. A population that is not able to take the buffers is not able to innovate, is not able to actually take up the challenges that are ahead.

I'm very proud to see the way in which we confront the systemic inequalities in our society, and I see the investment in child care in that vein as well. It is about ensuring that all children can access a very good child care education, to prepare them well to succeed in school. It's about allowing women to participate fully in the workforce, but also, it's a great equalizer for our society.

I am very proud of this budget, and I was disappointed to hear that people are not going to support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Daiene Vernile: I'm very pleased to join the conversation this afternoon as we debate budget 2018. I want to use my time to highlight budget items that are tied to my Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, where I now have the honour to serve.

Speaker, let me tell you a story about what happened to me, literally right after being sworn in.

The swearing-in happened on January 17. About two minutes later, as I stepped out into the hallway outside the Lieutenant Governor's office, where the swearing-in ceremony took place, a gentleman came up to me and—I'm not going to say that he pounced, but he was very strident. He introduced himself as being an advocate on behalf of the library sector, and he wanted to talk about funding for his sector.

He shared that their operating funds had been frozen by the Mike Harris government, by the Conservatives, in the late 1990s, and he was very distressed about this.

You heard my colleague the member for St. Catharines quote the Leader of the Opposition, Doug Ford, saying that there are too many libraries in his part of Toronto, in Etobicoke. In fact, I think he said that there were more libraries in his neighbourhood than there were Tim Hortons, which of course is factually untrue. He said that he could shut down libraries in a heartbeat. He even said that he had no idea who Margaret Atwood was. He had never heard of her, and this is after she got involved in the debate.

Well, suffice it to say, Speaker, we know that libraries promote literacy. Libraries are community hubs; they're a place for learning and discovery. We're asking this question: Why are the Conservatives against literacy? Why are they against learning and discovery?

Soon after being appointed to this position, there were a number of other library sector stakeholders who came to see me. I sat down with them, along with my staff, and we listened to them. We listened to their desire to have an increase to their operating funds.

I also received a motion that was signed by my mayor, Berry Vrbanovic, in Kitchener, along with the entire council. They were asking for an increase in operating funds for our local library. I will share with you that we also received similar motions that came to us from other municipalities right across Ontario.

So I was very delighted to see that in our 2018 budget, we are increasing operating funds for Ontario libraries, and I'll tell you how much: \$51 million for the next three years. There you go.

We're also going to be investing \$28 million in creating what we are calling "the digital public library." What is that? The digital public library is going to build a digital library for access by people right across Ontario to things like e-books, music and audio books.

Speaker, this is especially important for small libraries, remote libraries and libraries in rural areas, where oftentimes they don't have the funding that allows them to purchase new materials. This is going to be completely free. We are very pleased to be supporting this.

I know that people in my community, my municipal leaders, people in the library sector and the general public are going to be watching very closely to see who in this House is going to be supporting the budget—who is going to be voting for and against. They want to see support, and you're—

Interjections.

Hon. Daiene Vernile: Speaker, members who are heckling me right now are going to have to answer to their municipalities, the ones that wrote to me.

1710

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would ask the members of the opposition to come to order. I need to hear the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. She has the floor.

Hon. Daiene Vernile: Thank you, Speaker. I know that members of the library sector represented by the MPPs opposite spoke to me directly, letting me know that they want to see budget 2018 go through, so they can see an increase in their library operating funds. They'll be very disappointed if they don't see this.

I want to say that this budget supports libraries. It's the first increase they're going to see in over 20 years. I'm very delighted to advocate on their behalf.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Kingston and the Islands.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I'm very pleased to stand today and to speak in support of our budget bill, Bill 131.

I'm going to try to keep my comments a little constrained to the health care sector, because I do have some excellent health care facilities in Kingston and the Islands: the Kingston Health Sciences Centre, Providence Care, of course, which is brand new—it just opened up—and Hotel Dieu Hospital—three excellent hospitals that have been serving our community very well.

I'm pleased, as well, that within this budget we are investing \$822 million in our publicly funded hospitals across the province, which amounts to a 4.6% overall increase.

Interjections.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Yes, it's absolutely something to celebrate.

Through this funding, we will increase our capacity; decrease the wait times, and we've already seen an incredible decrease in wait times at Kingston General Hospital, which they have achieved through various different means; and we will improve access to care for families across Ontario.

I'm also, as most people in this House will know, very interested in mental health. That was one of the reasons why I ran in the election, because in my time working in a federal office I experienced many people coming into the office who clearly had some challenges with mental health, something that all of my staff wanted to be able to help on. It's very difficult and we know that we need additional resources there.

We are making generational and precedent-setting investments in mental health, and it is very, very needed: \$2.1 billion over four years for mental health and addictions, to deliver more accessible and integrated care.

I think it's important, as well, that we don't assume what anybody is hearing at the door. I would never suggest to the opposition—either party—that I know what they're hearing at the door. I know what I myself am hearing at the door. What I'm hearing at the door is that there is a fear that all of the work that we have done in the past four years since Kathleen Wynne has been the Premier of this province is going to be eroded. That's where the fear lies, and that's what I'm hearing at the door and across my community. I'm hearing it at every single event that I go to.

I know that David Pichora, for example, of Kingston General Hospital, is delighted, along with his team, that he will be getting \$500 million for a renovation of Kingston General Hospital. It's very needed; some parts of the hospital have not been renewed since 1950. I can tell you that it is most welcome news.

We will be redeveloping the clinical labs, the operating rooms, the emergency department, the neonatal intensive care unit and the labour and delivery suites. I have visited the neonatal unit, and I can tell you that it is very crammed in there. We need new facilities there in a very, very clear way. The technology has not been able to keep up as well, so that's been something that we look forward to renovating.

With respect to our infrastructure, we are going to be receiving over \$60 million for the Third Crossing; that's

the provincial portion. I was very pleased to hear Mark Gerretsen come to the table, as well as the municipality, with also a portion of \$60 million each. We will also be getting two new ferries for our region.

Mr. Arthur Potts: What's powering them?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: They're powered by electricity: one new ferry for Wolfe Island and one new ferry for my colleague across the way, at Amherst Island. I hope you will support your constituents in celebrating that new electric ferry.

I'm pleased to support this budget. Thank you so much. I hope our colleagues will support it as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Mississauga—Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: It's a pleasure to talk about this budget. This is a turning point for the province where, after nine years of paying down the recession deficits—a recession that didn't start here, but a recession in which Ontario came out stronger than it was when it went in, and came out with a stronger GDP and a much more diversified province.

I want to talk about one aspect of what Ontario gained in coming out of the recession. When I was elected in 2003, our commuters on the Milton line had five trains in the morning and five trains in the afternoon, each pulling 10 cars. They were packed, crowded beyond belief. Today, we have 10 trains going eastbound and we have 10 trains going westbound, each one of which pulls 12 cars. Since then, and during the recession, it's been that capital investment that the province has made—using borrowed money—that has more than doubled our GO train service. That has made a big difference. You can now get a seat on the GO train. That's important for people who need to connect between Mississauga and Toronto.

As well, some things that didn't exist: There's a new bus repair depot where GO buses can start and finish their run in the Mississauga area and it's located in Streetsville. It employs nearly 200 people. GO buses connect frequently to Toronto and to other points regularly during the day, and they have ample capacity for passenger demand. More importantly, you can use your Presto card, another innovation that occurred during that period where Ontario was coming out of the recession. It's the best system in the world now. There's a new GO train station in Lisgar, which opened in 2007 ahead of schedule and under budget. It was the first new GO train station built in the city of Mississauga in more than a quarter of a century.

All of our western Mississauga GO stations have been upgraded. All of their platforms have been lengthened. There's free WiFi in each station. The Presto card, which I mentioned earlier, has replaced coming downtown—which you used to have to do this way: cash fare for the MiWay bus, a 10-ride ticket for the GO train and tokens for the TTC. Now, with a single card, we can touch the card on the MiWay bus, touch it again at the GO station and touch it again to ride the TTC. That has replaced three different means of payment to three separate companies.

As well, there's a modern, mid-platform tunnel that connects the platform at the Streetsville GO station. Parking has been greatly expanded. There have been three—and soon to be four—extensions of parking at Streetsville. There have been two extensions of parking at Meadowvale. Meadowvale is going to get a brand-spanking-new station. Lisgar has been kept up to date. When it comes to transit, Ontario has done something.

I would like to just quote briefly from a report tabled in late 2017 from our neighbours to the south. This is the American Society of Civil Engineers. The American Society of Civil Engineers are the people who build infrastructure. In contrast to the work that Ontario has done, the American Society of Civil Engineers says this about the United States: "America's infrastructure bill is long overdue. Every four years, ASCE estimates the investment needed in each infrastructure category to maintain a state of good repair and earn a grade of B." Most recently, the US in almost every facet has earned a grade of D.

They continue to say, "Even though the US Congress in some states have recently made efforts to invest more in infrastructure, these efforts do not come close to the \$2 trillion in needs." The American Society of Civil Engineers says that "to raise the overall infrastructure grade and maintain" US "global competitiveness"—this is how far they're behind; this is their infrastructure deficit—"an additional \$206 billion each year."

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They conclude by saying—here are the consequences to America:

—" \$3.9 trillion in losses to the US GDP by 2025;

—" \$7 trillion in lost business sales....; and

—" 2.5 million lost American jobs....

"On top of these costs, hard-working American families will lose upwards of \$3,400 in disposable income each year...."

These are mistakes Ontario avoided through investment in the last nine years.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonnell: It's interesting to hear the various speakers on the other side talking about what they hear at the door. Well, what I'm hearing at the door—and, I think, our colleagues—is that people are fed up. People are frightened that this government may win another term. The polling shows that 81% of the province does not want this government to win.

One of the members talked about listening to the American Society of Civil Engineers. I'm an engineer myself, and I think that we have to give them some credibility. But this government did not listen to the Ontario association of professional engineers back in 2011 when they talked about the problems that they were creating with the Green Energy Act and about how our system would not accept the power because they were adding in these inflexible systems. Of course, history proved them right, as we have the most expensive power in North America. That's mainly because—not because

Hydro One was sold, which was a mistake, but because of the Green Energy Act. This government just moved ahead on that.

While we're reading quotes, I have this article about "Ontario's lost decade." It's interesting. It says, "Even if the Progressive Conservatives under Doug Ford, or the NDP under Andrea Horwath, win the June 7 election, no political party will be able to eliminate Ontario's chronic deficits and runaway debt immediately, assuming they want to"—of course, we know the NDP doesn't want to—"because of the enormous economic damage the Liberals have already caused" to our economy.

That's why people are frightened about another term. The economic damage has chased away our manufacturers, chased away jobs, and made this province so costly to do business that we're just not getting the business activity that this province deserves.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's my pleasure to rise for two minutes on what I've heard in the House so far. We had several on the Liberal side get up in 20 minutes and say their little pieces here and there.

Speaker, it's interesting that the member from Kitchener Centre focused on libraries. In our area, in Essex, we had probably the longest library strike in history because this Liberal government doesn't fund our library system appropriately. So it's interesting that she would focus on libraries and say that she's hoping that we and the Conservatives will support a budget full of promises that they've had 15 years to deliver on. Nobody in this province believes it anymore.

I spent hours upon hours upon hours this weekend knocking on doors, and I can tell you that in parts of my riding where the former Liberal member, a cabinet minister, got three votes for every one that I got, not a single person in that area said they were voting Liberal. As soon as they were asked—

Interjection.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: No, trust me, it was not blue.

Every person who was asked, "Do you know who you're voting for?"—the first thing out of their mouths was, "Not Liberal." You can thank our hospital hallway medicine crisis. You can thank their attack on labour, their bringing forward back-to-work legislation time and time again, supported by the Conservatives. It's important for LIUNA to recognize that it was Conservatives who supported back-to-work legislation.

This is why the people of this province don't believe a thing that is in this budget. And no, we will not be supporting it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Bill Mauro: There are a number of key points in this year's budget for my riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan that I would like to highlight. I've talked in the past about how, previous to our Liberal government coming into the position of government some years ago, the high-water mark for an annual expenditure on

northern highways was \$200 million to \$250 million—in that range. This year's budget for northern highways, once again, just blows that out of the water. There's about \$600 million to \$650 million in this year's budget for northern highways, which continues a pattern of major investments in northern highways right across the province.

People will see the evidence very clearly, Speaker: four-laning from Toronto to North Bay on Highway 11; four-laning from Toronto to Sudbury, much of that project under way or completed, on Highway 69; and four-laning from Thunder Bay east to Nipigon, about a 60-mile roadway, with half to two thirds of that work concluded. So major investments in northern highways are continuing in this budget.

Speaker, on Friday of last week, I had an opportunity to go out to a little rural village in my riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan called Nolalu. I met with about 15 people out there. One of the questions I was asked was about broadband expansion. I took the opportunity to talk to them, that we, as a government, have already—this budget was not a starting point—invested through ministries and/or the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund, along with partnering companies, in a number of projects expanding broadband in rural Ontario.

I also took the opportunity to remind them and to point out that this budget, which will be voted on very soon in the Legislature, has an additional \$500 million in it over three years for northern and rural communities only. Speaker, it's a major investment. We continue to recognize the needs of northern and rural Ontario. There's a longer list of items I could list here; time does not allow. But the northern highways piece and the rural broadband piece for northern and rural communities are two great examples of our commitment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): One last question and comment.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Speaker, it's astonishing, as we watch this debate, that the Liberal members could only speak for five minutes each. This is on the budget motion. This is their election platform budget, and they couldn't find anything more to speak about it than for five minutes each. They had to split up a 20-minute rotation between four of them because not one of them could find 20 minutes' worth of good stuff in the budget.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Okay. Back to the member for Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Randy Hillier: What is truly astonishing with this budget is that we're going into an ever larger deficit for promises that will never be implemented. They are going into a larger \$6.7-billion deficit for things that they're not going to do. The long-term-care package doesn't come into effect until 2022. Their daycare package doesn't come into effect until 2020. How can you go into a deficit for things that you're not doing?

That is an astonishing element of this Liberal government, Speaker. They are magical when it comes to

the books and the finances of this province. They're magical in the way they weave a story which has no relevance to the facts or to reality. But they're spending more money to deliver less and less to the people of Ontario every day, and they get to speak for five minutes because, I guess, the muzzle is just too tight on the backbench.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): One of the government members can reply. The Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry.

Hon. Nathalie Des Rosiers: The budget is balanced and there is a surplus for this year, so I think we should—

Interjections.

Hon. Nathalie Des Rosiers: I would have been happy to talk for much longer because there are a lot of good things in this budget. I have been here for a year and a half listening to question period, and I don't understand, having listened to the opposition members, why they don't vote for this budget. I don't know whether they are against more long-term-care beds or whether they're against investments in health care, in pharmacare or in drug plans for people who don't have a plan. Are they against investments in extending broadband in rural and northern communities? Are they against expanding OSAP? Are they against extending apprenticeships and skilled workers?

Sont-ils contre les investissements dans les écoles francophones?

1730

Are they against the Ontario Training Bank? Are they against free child care at two and a half years old? Against free drugs for seniors? Against investment in infrastructure? Against community hubs and against libraries?

I don't understand why people can vote against a budget like this, one that is directed to investment in the people of Ontario for today and for tomorrow.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm pleased to speak briefly to the budget motion this afternoon.

First off, I would like to thank my caucus colleagues, and the MPPs for Nipissing and Nepean—Carleton especially, for their work on reviewing this massive piece of legislation.

Here we are, Madam Speaker, 45 days until an election, debating a new batch of Liberal stretch goals and ill-advised expenditures. In that context, the analysis has to be very thorough, because you know there's a lot of strategy and spin involved in crafting this bill.

It's important as we analyze this pre-election budget that we review the track record of this Liberal government. The best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour, as they say. When you review the Liberal legacy, it's not hard to see why they would rather run an election around attack ads than on their own record. That legacy represents a lot of talk and not a lot of positive action.

This government makes a lot of promises to families in this budget, but after 15 years of experience, those

words are ringing hollow. We saw the same shtick before the last election, when the Liberals promised to lower insurance rates by 15% by 2015. Well, here we are in 2018 and rates are down about 3.3%. That was a central campaign promise the last time around, even if after the election the Premier tried to spin it by calling the promise a “stretch goal.” That is certainly not what they were saying before election day, and it’s certainly not what the people of Ontario voted for, which begs the question: Why should anyone trust what this government has to say now that another election has rolled around? They have proven themselves unwilling or unable to deliver for families in the province of Ontario.

We can talk about what’s in this budget, which is supposed to be the Liberal plan for the future of our province, but what we can’t debate is all that they intend but won’t reveal. In the last election, the Liberals did not campaign on a carbon tax and selling off Hydro One. They didn’t tell voters that was what they would get with a Liberal government, and yet those major policy choices came to pass with no real consultation and no approval from the people of Ontario, which begs the question of what else they might be hiding.

Similar concerns about what the Liberal government may be concealing were recently voiced by the Auditor General in the recent article in the *Globe and Mail* that delved into the questionable accounting practices the government adopted to keep the cost of the fair hydro plan off the book. The article quoted the AG extensively.

“In order for that to not show up on the bottom line, they created creative accounting to take it off the government’s statements,” the Auditor General said.

“If you get away with doing something that’s inappropriate accounting, the next time you’ll do it again and you’ll do it again,” she said. “Pretty soon they won’t have any numbers that will have any integrity behind them.”

The average person may not appreciate how harsh the condemnation is, coming as it is from our Auditor General. I’ve heard other people, unrestrained by official titles, referring to this “creative accounting” as “Enron-style accounting,” and that’s not far off the mark. Enron did its best to keep assets off the books, to limit their own liability and to put the best face possible on things for investors. That’s exactly what we’re seeing here in Ontario. The government has set aside government accounting standards in order to artificially improve their budget numbers.

The so-called fair hydro plan is a big, brazen example of the duplicity of this government. Another would be the changes they made to the rules around government advertising, freeing them from the oversight of the Auditor General.

Then there was the sale of Hydro One, which eight of Ontario’s watchdogs condemned as it removed public oversight. That criticism came from our Auditor General, the Ombudsman, the Integrity Commissioner, the French Language Services Commissioner, the Environmental Commissioner, the Provincial Advocate for Children and

Youth, the Information and Privacy Commissioner, and the Financial Accountability Officer.

Speaker, it’s impossible to say what other schemes have been employed over the last 15 years to preserve political advantage, which is why the third-party audit that Doug Ford has committed to undertaking is so important. If the government was willing to try to get away with such deceit on big, important and public issues, it’s impossible—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I’m going to ask the member to withdraw.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I withdraw.

If the government was willing to try to get away with, I guess, such criticism from outside agencies and outside legislative officers, it’s impossible to conjecture what else they have tried to get away with.

Speaker, costs keep going up. They’re going up for families, and they’re going up for businesses. This higher cost of living for families and the rising input costs for our companies are outpacing costs in neighbouring jurisdictions and outpacing the growth of income and revenue.

The people of this province have gotten wise to the Liberal scam. The cost of living has gone up, thanks to rising taxes, fees, hydro, gasoline, natural gas, car insurance, tuition, housing and rent—all things that this government has either caused or ignored. If they wanted to improve any of these things, they have had 15 years to do it and they have chosen not to. Clearly, the commitment is not there. They don’t care about how unaffordable life has become for the average person in Ontario.

The truth is that Liberal politicians and the elites they govern aren’t people who have to check their balance before they make a withdrawal. They wave off an extra \$5 here or an extra \$30 there, saying, “It’s no big deal.”

Cap-and-trade, Drive Clean, higher licence fees, higher taxes on alcohol and the death tax: It all adds up to a very big deal for a lot of families in this province when the price of absolutely everything seems to be on the rise.

Last week, I was asking the government about the rising price of gasoline, which is set to hit the highest price in a decade over the coming summer. Two ministers took turns shrugging that off, with no apparent concern for how it is impacting the cost of living and no willingness to take responsibility for driving the price even higher with cap-and-trade.

As a result of all of this, levels of household debt in this province have ballooned. The FAO reported in January that the household debt has grown by 5.6%, on average, every year between 2010 and 2016. In 2016, the average debt accumulated by each household was \$154,000.

When you go out and talk to people with young families—two-income families—this debt isn’t coming from extravagant trips or fancy technology. It’s debt that comes from paying for tires for the car and karate lessons for the kids. These are families who stay up late so they can do laundry during off-peak hours. These are families

who, frankly, deserve a lot more respect from this government.

Funding more programs is not the answer here. It's leading to taking money from one pocket just to put a little back in another. That's not helpful for a family's bottom lines. All you've done is take away their choices.

I'm not alone in saying this. A little over a week ago, Maclean's published a piece that said, "EKOS' most recent results show the Wynne Liberals lead only among upper class Ontarians. Support drops by half with working class voters, then by a third among poor voters. Liberals may not know it—and probably don't understand why—but they are the party of class privilege.

"And in this economy, that's a shrinking electoral segment."

1740

The provincial debt and the household debt are both at extraordinary highs. When interest rates go up, the implications for our economy are extremely worrying. Consumer spending will drop and government revenue will fall at the same time as the payments due on the provincial debt rise. As it is, over \$12 billion is being spent every year just to service Ontario's debt. That's \$12 billion of taxpayers' hard-earned money that isn't going towards health care, education or poverty reduction. We are less able to reliably fund all the things that this government claims to care about, because of their fiscal choices. The same can be said about the NDP, who have come forward with a plan for nothing but more deficit spending.

Just today, we heard from the federal Parliamentary Budget Officer about how detrimental the carbon tax, supported in Ontario by the Liberals and NDP, will be to Canada's economy. I would like to quote briefly from the economic and fiscal outlook published by the PBO:

"Implementation of the federal government's carbon pricing levy will generate a headwind for the Canadian economy over the medium term as the levy rises from \$10 per tonne of CO₂ equivalent in 2018 to \$50 per tonne in 2022.

"Based on analysis conducted by the Ecofiscal Commission, we project that real GDP will be 0.5% lower in 2022 than it would otherwise be. This amounts to \$10 billion in 2022."

Federally and provincially, Liberals are keeping families and businesses in the dark about the true cost of the carbon tax. My private member's bill, the Transparency in Gas Pricing Act, passed second reading last year but was never called to committee. That bill would have at least brought some transparency to how much natural gas users are paying for cap-and-trade, the cost of which is currently buried in their bills.

I would also just like to take this opportunity to remind the Liberal government of all the taxes that they are already collecting besides the carbon tax. We have many taxes, and I'm going to list, I guess, a few of them. We have the:

- HST, harmonized sales tax;
- gasoline tax;

- death tax;
- beer and wine tax;
- corporations tax;
- capital tax;
- corporate income tax;
- corporate minimum tax;
- insurance premium tax;
- debt retirement charge;
- disputing assessments or disallowances;
- employer health tax;
- fuel tax;
- gross revenue charge;
- hydro payments in lieu of federal and provincial corporations tax;
- international fuel tax agreement;
- international registration plan;
- land transfer tax;
- mining tax;
- Ontario health premium;
- payments in lieu of additional municipal and school taxes;
- personal income tax;
- property tax;
- provincial land tax;
- provincial sales tax;
- race tracks tax;
- retail sales tax;
- succession duty;
- tobacco tax;
- transfer tax;
- payroll taxes.

This list could go on and on and on. We know by being here for a number of years that there's one thing the Liberals and NDP like, and that is taxing.

The deficit has not gone down, but our credit rating has. And yet we keep seeing shortfall after shortfall, with no indication that spending is being brought under control, which is a big problem for a province that is the largest subnational borrower in the world. As the spending continues, more money will ultimately have to come from somewhere, so before this government goes looking for other ways to squeeze money from taxpayers, they need to look at what they're taxing right now. Before this government goes looking for more new revenue tools, as they like to call them, I would suggest they look at the many, many, many such taxes they already have in place.

It's not just with economic issues that this government has let families down. In my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, there are families that are incredibly frustrated with this government because their water wells have become contaminated. They never had any issue with drawing clean, clear water from their wells until wind turbine construction began in the area thanks to the Liberals' and the NDP's Green Energy Act. This construction involved pile-driving into the black shale bedrock that carries the water of the aquifer. Where is the accountability? These families are looking to government to stand up for them and hold the wind company to account. Instead, my repeated calls on their behalf for a

health hazard investigation have been ignored, and the government has chosen to accept the word of Samsung that their turbines and construction practices aren't the cause of this contamination in spite of the empirical evidence.

The bottom line is that we can't trust anything in this budget. There are more red flags than I have time to talk about here this afternoon. First we have the Liberal track record of deceit and broken promises. Then we have the condemnation of our provincial watchdogs—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm going to have to ask you to withdraw.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I withdraw.

Then we have the condemnation of our provincial watchdogs, not to mention the low opinions of economists, all of which indicate that we can't trust Liberal promises, and that even if they deliver on what they say they will do, it will be extremely harmful to our province in both the short and long term. Already last week, this budget prompted Moody's Investors Service to downgrade Ontario's economic outlook from stable to negative.

I would like to take a moment to go over the rationale given by Moody's for their downgrade because it offers a pretty objective assessment of how the Liberals are managing Ontario's economy:

"The outlook change to negative from stable on Ontario's ratings reflects Moody's expectations that spending pressure will challenge the province's ability to sustain balanced fiscal results across multiple years. Furthermore Moody's assumes that the financing requirements will be larger than previously assumed leading to an upward trend in the debt burden and a faster rise in interest expense than previously anticipated.

"With an election set for 7 June, the government released a 2018 budget that introduces a number of new spending initiatives and materially increases the capital infrastructure spending relative to previous plans. While this budget may not be implemented post-election, in Moody's opinion it highlights growing spending pressure that will need to be addressed in the near future. As the economy is expected to slow, with real GDP growth forecasted to fall from 2.7% in 2017 to 1.7% by 2021, revenue generation will be slower than previously recorded, limiting the province's ability to rely on revenue growth to balance the spending pressure. Downward pressure on revenue generation would be amplified if the province were to face unexpected negative economic shocks. Furthermore, as sustained low interest rates have pushed consumer debt to record levels over the past decade, the province will likely face increased challenges to introduce new revenue measures despite a high level of policy flexibility.

"The province's debt is expected to measure 233% of revenues in 2017-18, up from Moody's previous estimate of 227%. Financing to fund deficits and capital spending will continue to push the debt burden higher, with Moody's expectations that it could exceed 240% by 2021-22. Moody's assesses this level of debt to be

elevated compared to similar rated peers. Increased debt financing will also occur during a time of rising interest rates, which will accelerate the increase of the province's interest expense. Measuring an anticipated 8.3% of revenues in 2017-18, which is already the highest measure of Aa2 rated Canadian provinces, interest expense could consume 9% of revenue in 2020-21 and continue to increase thereafter as interest rates are expected to rise. An increasing interest expense is expected to further challenge the budget planning of the province."

Speaker, as I said, that was from Moody's. Moody's can see the writing on the wall, even if this Liberal government wants to keep their heads in the sand. Their spending habits are out of control and the burdens they placed on our private sector are taking a serious toll on our economy. It's clear that this government is selfishly and irresponsibly willing to put the good of the Liberal Party and their election chances ahead of what is good for the people of this province.

I know we all hear it here, whether we're meeting with families in our ridings, whether we're meeting with small businesses, farmers, medium and large businesses: Everyone is deeply concerned about the direction of Ontario. When we have a debt level in the province of Ontario where every man, woman and child in this province owes \$23,000, that just speaks to 15 years of what this Liberal government has done to the province of Ontario.

1750

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's my pleasure to rise and add some comment to the debate by the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex.

It's interesting, because he talked about the Liberals and he talked about how they're catering to their insiders, and basically said "the elites." I'm not going to argue that. All we have to do is look at what happened with the privatization of Hydro One. It's not the people of this province that have benefited; it's the wealthiest people, the folks at the top, who have benefited from the sell-off of Hydro One.

Just look at the CEO, Mayo Schmidt, who is making over \$6 million, and how they've put together this tidy little deal now, where Mayo and the board will get these huge payouts if anybody ever tries to cap the salaries or to get rid of them and put in a new board.

Clearly, the Liberals are well connected with Bay Street and bankers, and make deals with their high-profile friends who would benefit, rather than with the people of Ontario.

But I cannot believe the audacity of the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex getting up and saying that, when his leader, Doug Ford, himself could likely fall in the category of the elite.

Not only that, but he's proposing tax breaks to corporations who already, here in Ontario, have the lowest corporate tax rate. Do you know who that would benefit, Speaker? That would benefit Doug Ford. He

wants to give himself a tax break, and while he's giving himself a tax break, he opposes taking the minimum wage to \$15 an hour. Instead, he says he's going to give them a tax credit, I believe it was. Do you know what that tax credit will do if you keep them at \$14 and don't take it to \$15? You're taking \$1,000 out of the pockets of hard-working Ontarians. Shame on them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Brad Duguid: I really enjoy following a speech by the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. He is one of my favourite members in this Legislature. He and I have actually become good friends over the years. I don't agree with a word that he said today, and I usually don't, but he's a good guy.

But there's one thing that I think he and I will agree on. I'm hoping my dad is watching now. I told him to tune in, because I'm going to be heading, at 6 o'clock, out to Ajax to watch the Leafs game with my father, so that we can enjoy the Leafs game. I know that the member opposite would agree, and I think most members in the House—maybe not all—are going to be cheering for the Leafs to beat the Bruins tonight.

But I've got a bit of a conflict, Mr. Speaker. I'm second to the Minister of Seniors Affairs in the Queen's Park pool, and I went really heavy on Bruins players, because I am a closet Bruins fan, as well. I'll be wearing my Bruins hat and wearing my Leafs jersey at my dad's place. Whatever the outcome, I hope there are lots of goals, so I can continue to lead the pool.

All that being said, Mr. Speaker, I do want to speak a little bit about the issue before us today, and that's the budget.

I think it's really noteworthy to mention that when the facts don't align with the PCs' wished-for electoral or political position, what they do is, they then realign the facts. That's exactly what the member tried to do here.

The member who spoke prior to him talked about our economy and disparaged our economy. Mr. Speaker, we haven't had a stronger economy in generations. We have an unemployment rate that's at a 20-year low. They say that we've lost jobs. They're wrong; they're dead wrong. They're trying to tell people something that's not true. We've gained 840,000 net new jobs since the global recession.

If you can't use the facts, you don't have a good argument. My view is, they do not have a good argument.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure to rise and comment on the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. I listened very intently to that entire speech. Sitting next to him, I couldn't help it.

I am a little disappointed in the member from Scarborough Centre. I thought I was his favourite member. He always told me that. But he said this on live TV, so I thought I should get that in there: I thought I was his favourite member. Anyway, we've had a lot of good discussions. I think he's probably just happy that he

doesn't have to defend this budget on the doorstep in about seven weeks. But that's another story.

I did want to just recap what the member said. He talked about the 3D spending—delaying, denying and dithering—by the present government on dealing with the debt and the deficit, and the ongoing campaigning on the taxpayers' dime, making these announcements. They've been called out on it. Elections Ontario is looking into it, from what I understand from the press.

Also, he touched on—and it impacts my area directly—the industrial wind turbines, which we're going to put a stop to. Doug Ford, if he's Premier, is going to put a stop to any further green energy programs in Ontario when we win, and we're going to put an end to the expansion of any further green energy. I know the NDP will be disappointed in that because they supported the Liberal government. I remember in 2009 when they voted for it. In 2011, we could have driven a stake through the heart of the green energy program, and they were supported by the NDP at the time. So I think they're whistling past the graveyard when, now, they want to cry foul when there are issues down in Essex and Chatham-Kent.

Interjection: Good point, Bob.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Oh, I don't forget.

This affects my riding as well, so I intend to work as hard as I can to draw attention to this, and then we're going to put a stop to that.

Help is on the way, ladies and gentlemen. On June 7, we're going to turn this province around, and on June 8 we're going to form a new government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We have time for one last question or comment.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I, too, enjoy listening to the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. I was actually in his riding a couple of weeks ago, in Strathroy. I drove during a terrible rainstorm, with zero visibility on the 401, but I had to get to Strathroy to help my friend Todd Case, a local mayor in Warwick township, a former warden, and the next member of provincial Parliament for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex.

I had to help my friend Todd open his campaign office. I get there and the power is out—no power, because Monte has left town to join Ms. Sandals in Wallaceburg to tap into some Liberal hospital announcement. He just had to leave town when I was there.

I must say, like the member from Sarnia-Lambton, I am so disappointed. Member from Scarborough Centre, I thought I was your favourite member on the opposition benches. I come here to hear it's Monte McNaughton. For God's sake, Brad. Come on.

Interjection: You're my favourite member.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you so much.

I have to say, I am not the favourite of many Conservatives in the caucus, because they're all going to Yak's tonight to watch a hockey game. They're even taking Mr. Miller from Parry Sound-Muskoka, who cheers for the Bruins. He's going to be there with all

these Leafs—Yak had to leave early to go to get a buffet for his buddies tonight, and I wasn't invited. I even said, "Is there a game tonight? Can I go?"

Speaker, I must say, just as I mentioned the newest member that we'll have from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, that I met a young woman today who is going to beat Bob Bailey. She was here at the LIUNA picket line today, the new member from Sarnia-Lambton who will be joining us on the NDP benches.

Speaker, I thank you for your time this afternoon as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex can now respond.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Well, Mr. Speaker, what do I say to all of those members who added to this debate? I would like to thank the member from Windsor West and my good friend from Scarborough Centre. I've already been up a couple of times wishing him all the best. I'm going to miss him because I've always considered him as one of the blue Liberals who are left in caucus. There aren't very many blue Liberals left in the Liberal caucus, but I know we've actually agreed on quite a few things, even though, almost the entire time I've been at Queen's Park, I've been his critic. We've gotten to know each other and really appreciate each other.

I also want to thank my good friend Mr. Bailey from Sarnia-Lambton, who will be re-elected on June 7 with an even bigger majority—I think this will be his fourth term—and, of course, the member from Windsor-Tecumseh, for his kind words. I'm sorry that we turned the lights off for him when he arrived in Lambton-Kent-Middlesex; I had nothing to do with that. But it was

probably his support for the Green Energy Act with the Liberals that cut the hydro off that day.

Speaker, I just want to close with this: There are hundreds of thousands of people in this province who have been forgotten about in the last 15 years, under Dalton McGuinty and the current Premier and this Liberal government, and, quite frankly, by the NDP.

We've lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs. I come from the heartland of manufacturing in the country. In south-western Ontario, every town and village had a plant there 15 years ago. Today, unfortunately, because of things like the Green Energy Act, the carbon tax, the health premium—it goes on and on and on. All of these things were supported by the Liberals and the NDP. They have shut down these plants in our communities, and that's a shame.

Debate deemed adjourned.

Mr. Norm Miller: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Parry Sound-Muskoka.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'd like to correct the record of the member from Windsor-Tecumseh. I am a Leafs fan; I'm a big Bobby Orr fan as well, though.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Windsor-Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I accept his point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Before I adjourn the House, I want to express our sincere condolences to the families of the victims of today's tragic incident at Yonge and Finch. May everyone affected know that they are in our thoughts and prayers tonight.

This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1802.

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Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
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Bradley, James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
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Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
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Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Seniors Affairs / Ministre des Affaires des personnes âgées
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	Minister of Economic Development and Growth / Ministre du Développement économique et de la Croissance
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Des Rosiers, Hon. / L'hon. Nathalie (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
Duguid, Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail

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Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (IND)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development / Ministre de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Formation professionnelle
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
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Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales Minister Responsible for Small Business / Ministre responsable des Petites Entreprises
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MacLaren, Jack (IND)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Minister of the Status of Women / Ministre de la condition féminine
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Minister of Municipal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires municipales
McDonnell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGarry, Hon. / L'hon. Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
McMahon, Hon. / L'hon. Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	Minister Responsible for Digital Government / Ministre responsable de l'Action pour un gouvernement numérique President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Milczyn, Hon. / L'hon. Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Housing / Ministre du Logement Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research, Innovation and Science / Ministre de la Recherche, de l'Innovation et des Sciences
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Naidoo-Harris, Hon. / L'hon. Indira (LIB)	Halton	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation Minister Responsible for Early Years and Child Care / Ministre responsable de la Petite Enfance et de la Garde d'enfants
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Attorney General / Procureur général Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Romano, Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Hon. / L'hon. Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Hon. / L'hon. Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Deputy Speaker / Vice-présidente
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
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Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation / Ministre des Relations avec les Autochtones et de la Réconciliation
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